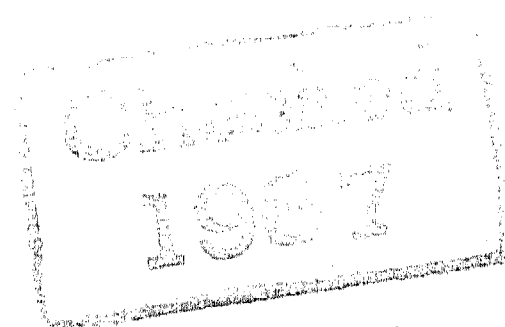


ENGLAND: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE



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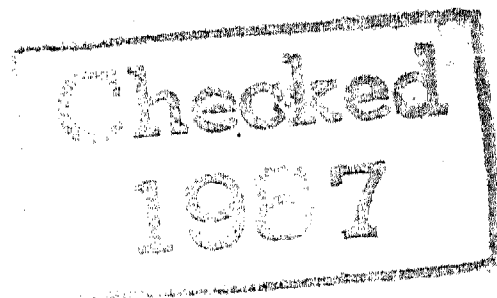
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ENGLAND

PAST PRESENT
AND FUTURE

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DOUGLAS JERROLD



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PREFACE

THIS BOOK attempts a brief survey of those historical forces which have chiefly determined our political and economic history in the past, and proceeds to examine in the light of the lessons of history the causes and the probable consequences of recent events. Inevitably, since I have been writing on history and politics for many years, I have said in this book some things that I have said elsewhere, but the synthesis is new and the purpose of this book something which I have not before attempted. I am, however, greatly indebted to my regular publishers, Messrs. Collins, for permission to quote here and there from my *Introduction to the History of England* and my study of *Britain and Europe, 1900-1940*. On my book on *England* in the Modern States Series (the rights in which belong to the publishers of this book) I had expected to draw quite freely, but in the event only a few pages have been relevant to my present purpose. My thanks are also due to Sir Charles Petrie and Mr. Stanley Morison for advice on subjects on which they are more expert than I can claim to be, and to the Reverend Philip Hughes for his great kindness in letting me see the proofs of the first volume of his forthcoming history of the Reformation in England. I am proud to be the first to acknowledge my great indebtedness to this fine work. Finally I must thank my former secretary Miss Margaret Cornwell for her patience and skill in typing and retyping this book from a succession of drafts which to any one else would have been indecipherable.

I would add two warnings. Firstly, this is not a short history of England. I have only attempted to give, as briefly as possible, the minimum of historical background which, rightly or wrongly, I believe to be necessary to an understanding of the revolutionary events of the present century and the problems which these events pose for us all to-day. Secondly, I have concluded my historical commentary with the outbreak of war

in September 1939. I have gone from here straight to the consideration of our present problems. It is far too early to attempt even a summary history of the Second World War, while the events of the last five years are within the personal recollection of all readers old enough to vote. It is with them that I am chiefly concerned.

D. J.

WHITEHALL COURT,

July 1950.

CHAPTER ONE

ORIGINS

WE MUST speak of Britain, not England, until the beginning of the seventh century of the Christian era when the Anglo-Saxons had completed the military conquest of such portions of our island as they ever effectively occupied. Having completed this self-imposed task, the Anglo-Saxons were able, not more than a thousand years after the time of Pericles, to begin learning to read and write, and after that to acquire the rudiments of civilization from the superior culture of their neighbours in Wales and Scotland, and from the still more superior culture of the Mediterranean basin.

In the following chapters we shall tell briefly how the people of this island survived their reversion to barbarism imposed on them by the Anglo-Saxon infiltration (developing as it did, somewhat absent-mindedly, into a military conquest), and became again, without much assistance from without, and after disposing of their Anglo-Saxon rulers, a great people. It is a remarkable story, and not the less so for being still unfinished. Alone of the peoples of Western Europe we have the capacity still to surprise the world. One of the reasons, perhaps, is that we can find in our astonishing past the support of history, tradition, and sentiment for any part which idealism, self-interest, or the mere necessity for survival may call on us to play. We can even alternately hate and love the French, and love and hate the Germans, because, although we have been conquered by both, we have conquered both; we have therefore a moral justification for either emotion.

Another and perhaps deeper reason for our moral and political survival lies in our geology and geography, which has exposed Great Britain to so many different cultural and racial influences, and taught us from our earliest years to live bravely

in the presence of danger and to be tolerant in the presence of diversity.

The cardinal facts of our geography are two.

Firstly, Great Britain is divided into a highland and lowland zone, the former comprising, very roughly, Scotland, Wales, and the highlands of Devon and Cornwall, and the latter the greater part of England. These zones differ entirely alike in climate and communications. England is a land of gentle slopes and wide expanses of level plains with a uniformly fertile soil and an adequate rainfall. Communications have always been easy and agriculture prosperous. In Wales and in Scotland the opposite conditions have always existed.

Secondly, owing to our proximity to the continent of Europe—not until 1500 B.C. did the English Channel attain its present width or depth and for some thousands of years before the second millennium B.C. there was a land bridge joining us to the Continent—southern England has always been accessible to the invader. Since, however, the whole movement of civilization and the migration of peoples have been from the earliest times from east to west, England has always received the successive invasions after they have lost their initial impetus; only a few of our invaders have penetrated to the highland zone. Nor, indeed, because of the climate and the difficulty of communications, had they any temptation to do so. There has thus been throughout our history an increasingly heterogeneous population in England itself and an increasingly sharp differentiation between the racial and cultural characteristics of England on the one hand, and of Wales and Scotland on the other. Wales and Scotland have always afforded, moreover, a relatively secure refuge for those defeated by any of our invaders or for those who wished to preserve from oppression by an alien culture or a tyrannical government their creed or their habit of life.

Even if the circumstances of our historical evolution had been otherwise normal, the facts of our geography and climate would have produced an unusual tension at the heart of our British civilization. It so happened, however, that the most numerous and the most destructive of our invaders were the Anglo-Saxons whose culture was unfortunately lower, both morally and

materially, than that of the Romano-British whom they conquered. As the result of this invasion, therefore, the normal situation was for a time reversed and the highland zone became the refuge not of the lower but of the higher culture, and the men of the highland zone were called on to assist in the re-education of the lowland zone in the Christian religion and in the arts of civilization. It is largely to this historical accident that we must ascribe the permanent division of the inhabitants of our relatively small island into three peoples, a division which has at once energized us and given us constant lessons not only in the art but in the practical necessity of compromise. Throughout our history we have been more adept in the politics of expediency than in the logical application of ideas. Our tolerance, particularly in the south, has been stronger than our faith.

We have, in other words, and our history will illustrate it at every turn, the defects of our qualities. It is a virtue to fight in the last ditch but it is not a virtue to find yourself in the last ditch before you wake up to your danger. The chief reason why we are almost always unaware of our immediate dangers is our scepticism, our refusal, as a habit, to believe that causes will have their effect. Those who have made this refusal will learn nothing from history because they will either not trouble to read history or they will turn to one of those comforting stories which tell us that everything unpleasant that has happened in history is the result of something which we already dislike and which we wish to dislike more—the foreigners; the rich; the Catholics, the Protestants, or the Jews; the Fascists, the Communists, or the Capitalists. All the zealot historians are victims of the same fallacy, the belief that history is a redemptive process operating in time. To account for the recurring catastrophe they must therefore have either some malignant force hitherto uncontrolled but capable of being subordinated to the needs of progress, or, alternatively, some specific capable of universal application but, owing to the fault of reactionaries, never yet applied. The rule of reason, the power of love, a universal anarchy or an omniscient state, the concentration of all property in a single hand or its infinite subdivision, an aggressive secularism or a rigid theocracy, self-determination or

universal dominion, the doctrine of Lake Success or of Moscow or the dogmas of Rome—each and all have had—some of them still have—their champions as universal panaceas.

As the state of men gets more desperate, and at no time since the beginning of time have more tens of millions of human beings been living in terror and misery and want than there are to-day, it is inevitable that those ardent but misguided spirits who look still for the redemption of man by man shall get more desperate in their search for the hidden enemy, more reckless in their advocacy of the universal specific.

The deep disorder of our time is at once the cause and the effect of this desperation of persecution and this increasing recklessness of speculation. The chain reaction is a phenomenon not confined to nuclear physics. It is actively working already in the mind of the mass; and must be arrested sharply and swiftly if the final catastrophe, which, by the logic of events, must be universal, is to be perhaps avoided.

This gradual though now swifter and terrifying approach to annihilation is, in the ultimate analysis, the product of that late sixteenth-century movement which a modern historian has called the counter-Renaissance, that scientific search, in reaction equally from classical and from Christian humanism, for a society free from all sentimental observances or traditional loyalties. It was at this point of time in the history of western civilization that the Prince of Darkness, having at last persuaded almost all men, and certainly all scientifically minded men, of his non-existence, reappeared as Evolutionary Progress to lead them forward towards the final triumph of Hiroshima.

The strangest feature of the tragedy is that there has been no time of crisis in our history when half an hour's reflection on the facts of that history (in place of reckless theorizing about what might have happened) would not have pointed to the danger inherent in the course adopted, to the risks involved in victory, to the revenges which time would take on the triumphant moment. It will, however, be no surprise to psychologists, though it may be to politicians, to learn that the ages of catastrophe have always, by way of psychological compensation, been ages not of repentant study of the past but of increasing optimism about the future. The golden age is always the other

side of the shambles; there has always been a prophetic voice over the carnage; the almost universal war always preludes the universal peace, the anarchy precedes the absolute rule of law. Such follies are as rampant to-day as in the fourth and fifth centuries. To cure them we must read our history books.

The story of England as it will be told briefly here extends in time over the whole period of recorded history and over a thousand years of pre-history. The professional pre-historians, who are the latest of the professional escapers from the facts of history, would have us dwell on the immense stretch of years, perhaps a million and perhaps two million, since man the tool-maker came on the earth. In that immensity of time lies, they would tell us, the key to the mystery. In the story of man's evolution from the ape to the pre-historian, the period which we elect to call the age of civilization is but a moment or two. Its ups and downs are of no importance. All that matters is the evolution now visibly in process of a new kind of man who shall be a function of the machine, no longer tormented by loyalties to God, king, or country, but content again as were his tree-climbing ancestors to eat, drink, make love, and die an inmate of the universal state which is the ultimate goal of society's evolution. The intervals between his performance of his natural functions will be planned leisure.

That something as horrible may be in store for us we can easily believe, but if it does it will mark the end, not the culmination, of the historical process, which is concerned only with civilized societies. History cannot begin until man becomes the conscious architect of his future, and it will end when he degenerates into being the impotent spectator of his own regimentation. Lunatics and prisoners have no history because they are both moral imbeciles.

Food-gathering savages inhabited this island probably for a million unhistorical years before the first peasants invaded our shores. Only here does civilization, and therefore history, begin—with the transition from food gathering to food producing, with the first successful application of mind to the problems not of individual survival but of social living.

From that point this brief record of our past will be carried through to our own times, a continuous commentary on a

continuing chain of cause and effect. The reader will be deceiving himself if he finds in the story any one dominant lesson, any key to Utopia, or any one policy marked with a signpost to perdition. Yet the story has a meaning, because it is the story of the conscious activities of men acting in other men's interest. . . . Nothing has happened in the four thousand years of our history which was not the consequence of men's deliberate action. Sometimes it has been the intended consequence; sometimes the exact opposite. More often it has been a consequence unforeseen by those responsible and, very occasionally, equally unforeseen by every one else. More usually there have been unheeded warnings. To-day time is short and we can afford no more.

The first food producers, the first peasant invaders, reached England about 2500 B.C., bringing with them the peasant religion of the Earth, the mother-goddess. After these came the warrior peoples who reached Eastern Europe probably from the Caucasus about 2300 B.C. These were fighting pastoralists who brought to Europe the first knowledge of the highly developed metal-using civilizations of the Near East. Some of their descendants reached these islands about 1800 B.C., and other warrior invaders followed a hundred years later, bringing with them the early Bronze Age culture and the pastoral religion of sky god. These invaders came from the Rhineland and from Brittany and something of their works and days has come down to us in the great temples at Avebury and Stonehenge. By 1500 B.C. these warriors and peasants had built a relatively stable, wealthy, metal-using, and weapon manufacturing civilization in southern England. The trade in bronze weapons from Ireland ceased and a great import trade developed in Irish gold. The trade of Wessex, the centre of this our first civilization, extended from Ireland to the Baltic and southwards to Crete. Here, therefore, we stand on the threshold of our history. In these islands, already three times invaded since the dawn of civilization, there were present not only the descendants of palaeolithic and mesolithic savages but of the first peasant invaders of Europe, of the Alpine broadheads, and of the Rhineland invaders who represented the dominant Indo-European

warrior strain. Elsewhere in Britain there are isolated graves of great chieftains with gold-mounted daggers, cups of amber, gold and shale, barbed arrowheads and arrow-straighteners, but in Wessex there are upwards of a hundred of these graves still identifiable. They are a fitting and indeed necessary complement to the great 'henge' cathedrals, and reflect like them the wealth and power of the economic, political, and religious centre of England.

For all its power and splendour, this civilization lacked the plough, the key invention on which true civilization depends. The plough was brought to England by the first Celtic invasion in 750 B.C. The Celts were a mixed peasant and warrior people, the result of a fusion of the Alpine and Indo-European stocks. They came to England to settle rather than to conquer, but they brought not only the plough but the broadsword, and were of the same stock as those heroes who, a little later, swept across the Rhine with their horsed chariots and planted their fortresses on all the western hill-tops, lasting memories of Western Europe's brief but brilliant Homeric age. These more adventurous Celts reached England in 500 B.C. and brought with them what became our first Iron Age culture. Like all our prehistoric invaders, they came first to our southern coasts, but remains of their characteristic settlements, open villages, and isolated farmhouses and hill-top forts,¹ are found as far north as Scarborough and as far west as Exeter. They brought, in addition to the light plough, improved spindle whorls, cylindrical loom weights, and silos for storing grain. Their square fields and cattle-runs, grouped to form farms probably of an

¹ These hill forts vary in size from six to eighty acres, the normal size being from fourteen to twenty-four acres. The defences are constructed on a uniform plan, consisting of a deep V-shaped ditch, separated from the ramparts themselves by a platform from six to ten feet wide. These ramparts to-day present the deceptive appearance of gentle, grassy slopes. Actually they were abrupt and faced with a strong wooden or stone revetment carried up to form a parapet. The ramparts of Cissbury, the largest of the forts, are estimated to contain sixty thousand tons of chalk and the revetment must have required from eight to twelve thousand timbers, each at least fifteen feet high and nine inches thick. As public works these forts take rank with the great pyramids. The labour of thousands of men must have been concentrated on these stupendous memorials of a peasant civilization determined to survive.

average size of fifteen acres, mark the beginnings of a truly settled agricultural civilization in England.

This civilization came to us ready-made from without; it had no deep roots, and although it was certainly a civilization it was a very primitive one. Contemporary with the Wessex hill forts are the glories of Periclean Athens, the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, the history of Thucydides, and the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Our own first contact (and that at second hand) with the local city civilization of Greece was when the third Celtic invasion took place about 250 B.C. These invaders had lived in close contact not only with the town civilization of the eastern Mediterranean as represented by the Greek cities of Marseilles and southern Gaul, but with the Etruscans in Italy. From southern Gaul and Italy they had been used to buy jars of Mediterranean wine with complete table services of Greek and Etruscan metal vessels and Attic or Italian pottery, which they had exchanged for amber, furs, slaves, and forest products. Artisans from Greece had taught their craftsmen to copy classical metal-work and to produce for the first time in Western Europe what have remained our everyday necessities. The Etruscans had given them the light two-wheeled chariot in which the heroes went to battle and to death. Their settlements provided employment for skilled wheelwrights, armourers, and metal-workers, and produced the first regular succession of artistic craftsmen with whom begins the authentic tradition of Celtic art. This art had its source in the classical models and motifs; its inspiration in the Celtic genius for abstract generalizations informed by an astonishingly fine perception of aesthetic possibilities. The result was a flamboyant reaction from the naturalism of classical motifs. The Celtic invaders of 250 B.C. brought all these arts and skills to our shores fully developed, and England is rich in their remains.

But at this point we first see the clear process of differentiation at work. The high civilization was not uniformly diffused. It came in its full vigour to Dorset and Somerset whence it spread to the Cotswolds. In Scotland, where the invaders built innumerable forts with stupendous stone ramparts from ten to twenty feet thick, the invaders were warrior farmers rather than

great chieftains, pioneers rather than conquerors. Only in the western highlands do their forts lose the character of fortified hill-top villages and appear as the living places of clan chieftains. In Yorkshire, however, a definitely aristocratic civilization grew up and the chieftains were nobly buried with their chariots as they had been in the great Iron Age graves in Champagne. From Wessex and from Yorkshire the civilization spread east and south, wherever the subordination of the established peasant agriculture enabled the chieftains to lead their traditional life as a ruling class, exchanging the benefits of government for the lion's share of the wealth of the governed.

The three centuries which separate this invasion from the Roman Conquest in A.D. 43 were centuries of marked progress. The remains of the great marsh village preserved in the peat at Glastonbury tell us of the cultivation of wheat, barley, and beans, and the breeding of cattle, sheep, pigs, and goats. Corn was ground in rotary querns and there was a highly developed cottage weaving industry. Transport was by dug-out canoes and four-wheeled carts. There is evidence also of the use of tin from Cornwall, lead from the Mendips, shale from Dorset, and glass beads from Gaul. This civilization was widespread and the growth of trade led to the introduction of iron currency bars which were still used in southern England in Caesar's time, but before Caesar's invasion the Belgic invaders under Cassivelaunus came to south-east England from Picardy. It was they who brought to Britain coinage, the habit of city life, and the heavy plough, which, because it cut and turned the soil instead of merely scratching the surface, made intensive farming possible.

The Belgic civilization was a high one. Their rulers were Latin-speaking and Roman at least in the externals of culture. They imported glass and china from Italy, and the density of population in Picardy has been estimated at the astonishing figure of forty-two per square mile—higher than that of much of Scotland and Ireland to-day. The civilization which the Belgae brought to England in 75 B.C. was certainly highly localized, but, as we have seen, the older civilization introduced by the Celts was itself of a relatively high order and fairly widespread.

The wealth of Britain was indeed greater than it was reputed in Caesar's time. The great deposits of argentiferous lead were not exploited until the time of Augustus, but Caesar's description of the country, and in particular his statement that agriculture was only practised in the coastal regions of the south, and that the bulk of the inhabitants were hunting savages clothed in skins, is not only at variance with the facts but difficult to reconcile with Caesar's strategy. It is more important to remember his reference to the dense population of the south ('*Hominum est infinita multitudo creberrimaque aedificia*') and to reflect that his information as to the north and west came from prejudiced Belgic sources, who evidently regarded the pre-Celtic civilization which still survived in the forests of the weald as representative of the entire country outside their own kingdom.

Cassivelaunus is the first name, the Belgic invasion of 75 B.C. the first date, in British history. With the successive invasions of Julius Caesar in 55 and 54 B.C. Britain comes into the written record of European history. We were already a mixed people, and even if we assume that the majority were Celts we must remember that the Celts themselves were a mixed race, with the ready adaptability of mongrels. Gibbon declared that they had 'valour without conduct.' To study Celtic history is to study every phase of the art of retreat, and to study Celtic politics is to study the anatomy of disorder and the grammar of treachery. The Celts proved themselves, as the builders of the pre-Roman Iron Age civilization of the west, brilliant in adaptation, artistic in execution, volatile, personally gallant but collectively unreliable. Their loyalties were to their local chieftains who served where their interest lay. Their trade was war, but their objective was gain, not glory. This fact was the salvation of Europe in the critical century between Caesar's conquest of Gaul (57 B.C.) and the Emperor Claudius's conquest of Britain (A.D. 43). This was the century of crisis for the whole western world, when, first, factions threatened to destroy the power of Rome at the source, and when, secondly, after the murder of Julius Caesar, the Hellenistic east, in the persons of Antony and Cleopatra, challenged the Roman west for the domination of the world. Neither the victory of government

over faction nor the victory of the rule of law over the superstitions of oriental despotism could have been won if the Celts of Gaul and southern Britain had chosen to challenge the power of Rome in the hour of danger. Happily such a challenge was not suited to the ambitions of the Celtic chieftains. Instead, the century of crisis in the Mediterranean and the East was the century of town building in France and Spain, and even in Britain there was a great expansion of trade and population. The Greek geographer Strabo, writing not more than twenty-five years after Caesar's time, describes a large export trade from Britain in wheat, cattle, gold, silver, iron, hides, slaves, and hunting dogs, and under imports mentions bracelets, necklaces, amber, and glassware.

By the time of the Emperor Claudius, when Rome finally decided on the conquest of Britain, Britain south and east of the Weymouth-Bristol-Northampton-Lincoln lines was substantially romanized, as were the Brigantes in Yorkshire. The Catuvellauni, Julius Caesar's chief opponents, had enlarged their kingdom until under Cymbeline (A.D. 9-A.D. 42) it extended from the Weald to Cambridge and from Essex to the Cherwell valley. To the east another Belgic kingdom extended from the Weald to Salisbury Plain. In the north, excluding the territory of the Brigantes, Britain was still in the early Iron Age and there were substantial Bronze Age survivals.

The lives of these Celtic warriors and traders in the south and of the primitive unlettered peasants in the north and west seem remote and irrelevant to us to-day, but the condition of England at the dawn of the Christian era did in truth predetermine not only the time and the nature but the extent of the Roman Conquest, which it is therefore wrong to regard as the first decisive event in the history of the English-speaking peoples.

The Romans were rulers, not conquerors or colonizers. The Roman world was a network of city communities, self-governing and in the last resort self-sufficient, but depending for their security on the defence of military frontiers against the barbarian, and for their prosperity and progress on secure communications which promoted and protected the greatest system of international trade over a wide area ever known until the

nineteenth century. Always, since the first foundations of the Roman dominion were laid with the conquest of Spain, trade and city life preceded the legions, who came not to create but to preserve and foster an already organized social and economic system.

The decision to occupy and rule Britain was taken in A.D. 43 because the death of Cymbeline in A.D. 42 threatened to bring about the break-up of the kingdom and to destroy the profitable trade in which Roman citizens of many races were already actively engaged. But there were no trading communities and no city life outside the lowland zone. Rome was, therefore, from first to last, uninterested in occupying or ruling Scotland or Wales. Her objects, from which her rulers never deviated during the three centuries of her effective occupation, were to create and defend a military frontier protecting the lowland zone from the incursion of the unurbanized tribes in the west and the far north, and to foster and develop city life and freedom of trade and intercourse behind the strategic frontiers.

This policy Rome maintained with extraordinary fidelity. It has been criticized on the ground that the defence of her long land frontiers, firstly the Rhine, secondly the Danube, and lastly Hadrian's Wall from Wallsend on the Tyne to the Cumberland coast, imposed a military burden which could not be carried indefinitely, while the tribes beyond the frontier grew through the centuries increasingly powerful as they began to share in the wealth and to acquire the military skill of their neighbours. All this is true, but in the long retrospect of history it is unimportant. Civilization is a product which needs intensive cultivation and there is a limit to the area over which this process of cultivation can be applied in any one epoch or by any one people. Rome created the civilization of Western Europe, which is to-day the civilization of the whole western world, because, alone among the great empires of history, she never accepted commitments, however attractive to the ambition of the adventurers, which it was beyond her capacity to discharge. Leaving out of the reckoning Australasia and the Americas, it is no coincidence that the countries of Europe, the Near East, and North Africa, now allied for mutual defence

against the Asiatic despotism of Moscow, correspond almost exactly to the area of the Roman Empire at the end of the first century A.D. Rome's vast civilizing mission, consciously assumed and systematically planned, could not have been fulfilled except within a limited area and behind strategic frontiers capable of economical defence.

This lesson was first learnt and applied in A.D. 9 when the Roman legions under Varus suffered a decisive defeat between the Rhine and the Elbe at the hands of the German tribes under Arminius. The military difficulties of the Elbe as a defensive barrier against eastern invasion were as clear then as to-day and led Augustus to accept the defeat as final and to fix the boundary of the empire on the Rhine. The consequences have often been judged disastrous, but in the first crisis of the empire at the end of the second century, and probably much earlier, the Danube frontier would have been overrun but for the great natural strength of the Rhine frontier which enabled successive emperors from Hadrian's time onward to reduce its garrisons in order to strengthen the longer and more vulnerable frontier from Switzerland to the Black Sea.

It was in accord with the same policy that the great Roman governor of Britain, Agricola, who wished to fix the strategic frontier of Britain in northern Scotland, probably in the neighbourhood of Perth, was refused permission to do so, to the disgust of his son-in-law, Tacitus, the historian. That there should be three peoples in Great Britain each differing from the other in racial and cultural traditions was thus finally determined by the insistence of Rome that policy must conform to military-political necessities and must never be deflected by ideological and sentimental considerations. The people of what is to-day England continued, therefore, to be separated from those in the northern and western highlands throughout the four centuries of Roman rule.

There was, however, no Roman settlement even of the low-land zone of Britain. The legionaries, once the frontier was fixed, were settled at Caerleon, at York, and at Chester. The famous wall, when built by Hadrian, was manned by auxiliaries from all quarters of the empire. After Hadrian's time, more-

over, the legionaries became settled in the country and recruited themselves either from the children of the legionaries married to British wives, or from native British stock. This process can be described as the barbarization of the empire or the civilization of the barbarians. What was more significant was that this process, taking place along the whole extent of the frontiers of the empire, meant that the legionaries and auxiliaries came to be purely mercenary soldiers, culturally and politically more sympathetic to the unurbanized peasantry of the frontiers than to the softer, sophisticated and cosmopolitan population of the towns. The Italian people, and notably the Roman aristocracy, had to learn and suffer under the age-long lesson that those who will not fight cannot rule. From the third century onward the legions chose the emperors, and men of every race and colour wore the imperial purple at the bidding of different armies, but mostly of the armies on the Danube on whom fell the chief burden of defence against the barbarians whose pressure on the frontier was continuous from the time of Marcus Aurelius until the sack of Rome by the Goths in 410.

Because the strategy was sound, the frontiers held for nearly four centuries, but because the later rulers of the empire were rapacious and incompetent, the purpose of the frontiers, to protect the innumerable townships which were the basis of the Roman civilization, was finally defeated. From the middle of the third century onward town life in Britain began to decay, and the Roman world everywhere began the transition from the high city civilization of the classical world to the predominantly rural plantation economy¹ characteristic of Western Europe from the dark ages until the eleventh century. Such

¹ 'The staple crop of all British agriculture . . . was wheat. The Romano-Britons continued the prehistoric custom of harvesting before the ears were ripe, but what may have been a new practice was introduced, that of drying the grain in a kiln. . . . Here and there vines were grown and wine made. . . . Then ordinary livestock of a villa included horses, cattle, sheep, and pigs; geese were often kept, and dogs and cats were, of course, indispensable. A villa thus provided could keep itself in bread, meat, milk, and cheese; wine or beer; wool for spinning and weaving by its own women; raw leather; timber for burning and for joinery; tallow for candles; in short, almost everything needed for its own existence.'

Collingwood and Myres, *Roman Britain and the English Settlements* (Oxford University Press: 2nd edition, 1937).

wealth as survived the exactions of the tax gatherers fled from the cities to the villas.

At the root of the disorder was the moral vacuum created by the disrepute into which all the varieties of pagan belief had fallen. The old gods had lost their magic and the secret and mysterious cults which came in from the east were disintegrating in the effect on public and private morality. The high pagan virtues of courage, patriotism, and family piety which shine through the poetry of Virgil and so exalt it that Virgil became almost a Christian classic in the Middle Ages, could not ultimately survive the loss of all faith in a supernatural order or in a destiny stretching beyond the grave. A great effort was made under the Pannonian Emperor Decius to revive emperor worship, to provide a foundation and inspiration for the morale of the imperial armies, and it was this which led to the last but one of the great persecutions of Christians throughout the empire in A.D. 250. The final persecution was the most severe of all, launched in the reign of the great Emperor Diocletian under the inspiration of the neo-platonic philosophers who hoped to restore at the point of the sword the intellectual and moral authority of the Hellenistic culture and to make the religion of all sensible men the inspiration of a reformed empire. This attempt also failed. Hellenistic philosophy might console a handful of the citizens but it could not rebuild the city. The empire needed the inspiration of a common faith which could speak intelligibly to the common man. That faith, in the circumstances of those days, could only be Christianity and this fact was recognized by the Emperor Constantine.

From the pagan empire the western world learnt the art and the purpose of government, the application of the rule of law to the preservation of the rights of free men living in ordered and mutually dependent societies. The Christian empire revealed to mankind, albeit imperfectly, a more subtle secret, how men and women, all equal before God and all sharing a common destiny, could at one and the same time be free moral agents and loyal citizens of a secular society.

It was too late to save the political framework of the western empire. The reformed empire perished ultimately at the hands of a bureaucracy which strangled the economy at the

centre. What, however, was historically decisive was that the reformed empire, as the result of a great decentralization of civil administration, the creation of mobile armies and the restoration of the rule of law, gave Europe another century of comparative order. The new rural economy gained strength, and the Christian Church came to maturity as an institution within the framework but not subject to the direction of the state. Freed from external restraints the energy of the Christian bishops and preachers turned outward. The third century had seen in the writings of Tertullian the beginnings of the literary and intellectual tradition of Latin Christianity and the substantial conversion to Christianity of the Roman provinces of Asia and Egypt. Outside the Roman Empire, Christianity was well established among the Gothic tribes across the Danube frontier, and in Armenia and Edessa it had become the official state religion by the end of the century. The fourth and fifth centuries saw the establishment of monasticism in its western form and a great development of missionary activity. Three Romano-British noblemen, known to history as St. Patrick, St. Illtud, and St. Ninian, all trained in the newly founded monasteries of southern France, converted the Irish, the Welsh, and the Picts of south-west Scotland. Celtic Christianity, so-called, was the creation of Romano-British missionaries educated in Gaul and acting under the direct orders of Rome. When Rome was sacked by Alaric in A.D. 410 the leader of the Goths was a Christian who had been a Roman general.

It was thanks to Roman Christianity, and its organized government consciously fulfilling its mission to teach all nations, that some measure of civilization and of organized living survived the collapse of the empire in the west and lived on through the Dark Ages. The barbarians who came to rule in France, Italy, and Spain were mainly Arian heretics, not Christians of the Roman discipline but the Roman hierarchy survived. There was no challenge to the power or authority of the papacy, and the sons and grandsons of the first generation of the conquerors came to accept the discipline and the doctrine of Rome. Only in Britain were the invaders pagan barbarians untouched by civilization. Within a century of the departure of the Roman legions from Britain the Anglo-Saxons had secured

a firm foothold in south-east England which in the course of another century they were to extend and consolidate. The Anglo-Saxons, however, never conquered Scotland or Wales, where Christianity continued and the classical learning survived. It was only the lowland zone of Britain which, from the middle of the fifth to the end of the sixth century, ceased to be part of the civilized world.

CHAPTER TWO

ANGLO-SAXONS, DANES, AND NORMANS

IN 410, when the last Roman legion left Britain, there were Jutes in Jutland, Angles in Schleswig, and Saxons along the German coast from the mouth of the Elbe as far as the mouth of the Rhine. In Frisia, beside Saxons, there were Jutish settlers, and there were small Saxon settlements in Picardy and Normandy. In the course of about one hundred and fifty years invaders of all these races and from all these lands reached our shores. They came not as conquerors, or bearers of a high or free civilization, but as unlettered savages driven across the seas by poverty. They were raiders, privateers, pirates. Only to Kent did they come as an organized military force and there they came by invitation, probably in 446, to protect the British inhabitants from raiders from Scotland and Ireland. The revolt of these mercenaries, *c.* 473, established the first Saxon kingdom; 447 is the legendary date for the founding of the kingdom of Sussex: *c.* 514, Cedric (or Cerdic) made the first Saxon settlement in Wessex: the two northern kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira (extending from the Firth of Forth to the Humber and ultimately to become the kingdom of Northumbria) were founded *c.* 547 and *c.* 559; the East Anglian kingdom came into being about the same time; the great inland kingdom of Mercia was founded some fifty years later, but did not become powerful until the time of King Penda in the middle of the seventh century.

These dates tell some part of the story but they reflect no decisive events. The issue between British and Anglo-Saxon was decided in 577 by the battle of Dereham, when the West Saxons under Ceawlin reached the Bristol Channel, and in 615 when the Northumbrians under Aethelfrith defeated the British at Chester and reached the mouth of the Mersey. These

accidentally strategic victories (for they were unrelated and their consequences were not intended) split the British resistance into three divisions, the Welsh-speaking inhabitants of what then became the kingdom of Strathclyde (comprising Cumberland, Westmorland, and the western lowlands of Scotland, the Welsh in Wales, and the men of Devon and Cornwall. Centuries were to elapse before the Welsh accepted English rule; Cumberland and Westmorland were settled not by the Anglo-Saxons but by the Norsemen; Scotland did not accept English rule until one hundred and four years after a Scottish king accepted the English throne; even the Cornish were not conquered until the ninth century. But after the Anglo-Saxons reached the western seas at Bristol and Chester, all question of effective British resistance to Anglo-Saxon rule over England was at an end.

The story of England under the Anglo-Saxons, from the middle of the fifth century, that is, until the Norman Conquest, has been brilliantly told by Sir Frank Stenton in one of the few modern classics of English history.¹ For a variety of reasons it is a story which it is impossible to summarize, but there are salient features which have influenced the whole of our history. We know from archaeological evidence that there was no single or mass invasion but a long period of infiltration by war bands of Angles and Saxons with differing customs. Across the English Channel they came to Sussex and Wessex, but the majority came across the North Sea and moved up the river valleys of East Anglia, settling in the low grounds, draining the marshes, and ultimately clearing the midland forests. We know that the Romano-British towns were largely destroyed and that those which survived, with the exception, probably, of London, were almost wholly deserted. We know that Christianity wholly died out in the lowland zone, except possibly in Kent, and that the hierarchy ceased to function. Britain, which was represented by at least three bishops at Church councils in the fourth century, passes out of the ecclesiastical records for a century and a half after the first barbarian invasions. Finally we know that the invaders came in fighting bands under

¹ *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford University Press, 1944).

aristocratic leadership, but were later followed by a substantial body of settlers.

The settlers in seventh-century Wessex, and probably also in the Midlands, in Lindsey, and in Deira, brought with them what is known as the open-field system of agriculture, whereby the arable belonging to a particular community normally lay in great unenclosed expanses, over which the holding of the individual peasant was distributed in scattered strips. The arable was usually worked on the three-field system, each field being in turn under winter wheat, spring oats or barley, or fallow. Associated with the arable was the necessary pasture-land, held in common by all the several owners of the arable; the same would apply to adjacent woodlands. A large part of England, however, never came under this system. It is not found in the old kingdom of Bernicia nor in what are now the eastern lowlands of Scotland which, as far north as the Firth of Forth, belonged to the seventh-century kingdom of Northumbria. It is seldom found in the north-west of England and it was never introduced into Cornwall or the borderland of Wales. In East Anglia the evidence suggests that the peasantry originally held their land in compact holdings which were only disintegrated by a long continued process of dividing land among co-heirs. Finally, the Kentish land system was probably different in origin from that of the rest of England. There the unit was not, as elsewhere, the village, but the small farm under single ownership, the average size of a farm being perhaps as much as one hundred and sixty acres. Nevertheless, the free peasant, the 'ceorl,' was, at the beginning of the seventh century, the representative Anglo-Saxon citizen everywhere, irrespective of the agricultural system. The Kentish ceorl was a richer man than the average ceorl of Wessex, East Anglia, Mercia, or Northumbria, but the difference was of degree, not of kind. Where the ceorl lived in a community settlement under the open-field system, he remained a free landowner, and where, as in Kent or East Anglia, his holding was self-contained, he remained, equally with the ceorl on divided land, subject to the obligations to land imposed by custom and later by law on all landholders.

The bands of freemen who settled England had each a

chieftain: these chieftains became petty kings and maintained themselves by the land which they appropriated as their personal holding. From the earliest times, however, the kings had also acquired by custom certain rights, to tribute, to maintenance, and to the three military duties of service in the militia or fyrd, fortifications, and bridge building. It is evident that these rights of the kings, as established from the earliest times, are incompatible with the theory that the early form of Anglo-Saxon social organization was a communal society of free and equal citizens. It is equally evident that the existence from earliest times of open-field village communities, though, as is now agreed, neither communal nor tribal, is incompatible with the theory that all land was held originally of a lord. It is obvious that in England there were from the first days of the settlement many kinds of holdings. There was the land of the invading chieftain who became a petty king, and later, under the Heptarchy, the lord or under-king of the greater kings. There was land given by the kings to their principal followers or those who had done good service in their households. There were the open fields and the small holdings. It was the task of the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries to weld these systems of land tenure into one.

Neither the archaeological nor the later written evidence is consistent with a belief in any mass extermination or mass migration of the Romano-British population. No doubt there was a substantial drift westward and northward into Wales and Strathclyde and a rapid shrinkage of population in the towns, but we must remember here that the Romano-British town was primarily a marketing and administrative centre that served a population largely living in the surrounding countryside. The actual town dwellers were never numerous. For the rest, the population of the countryside mostly remained. Some, no doubt, were enslaved, but where, as in Wessex, we have the evidence of written laws, we find British freemen enjoying defined rights and still in possession of land. What is certain, however, is that the Romano-British educated classes, the administrators, the traders, and above all the priests and bishops, were either murdered or driven out of the country. The arts of civilization perished entirely. Our conquerors were wholly

illiterate and Procopius, writing in the middle of the sixth century, speaks of civilization in Britain as something belonging to an almost legendary past.

Most great peoples have been born of a substantial community of race or culture or creed which has inspired them to seek and energized them to hold strategic frontiers and create for themselves the necessary economic foundations of nationhood. Here, at the dawn of English history, we find a mixed Romano-British population overrun by invaders of at least three different races, each with widely differing customs but all of them without a civilization or a creed. There was in fact no single unifying factor. The war bands were not even members of a tribe; nothing approaching the clan system ever existed in England. What came instead was, first, a class system imposed by legislation from above in the interests of discipline on an anarchy of free custom, and, secondly, a culture and a creed brought back to England by Latin, Greek, and Celtic missionaries, administrators, and scholars. Profound consequences followed. Firstly, Christianity returned to England as part of an alien and superior culture introduced by foreigners and to a large extent imposed by kings on their subjects. Secondly, learning returned in the form of the Latin speech and writing, while the beginnings of English prose took the form of translating into the vernacular selected Latin religious and classical texts. Thirdly, no national spirit developed which could suffice to resist the great Viking, Danish, or Norman invasions. The governments of the different kings had given laws to their subjects and codified their various customs, but in doing so they had enhanced a natural separatism which they fostered in the interests of their own aggrandisement.

We are accustomed to say that England was reconverted to Christianity by Gregory the Great and Augustine of Canterbury and united politically by Alfred the Great but neither statement is true. Augustine converted the King of Kent and established the see of Canterbury. Alfred the Great added a part of Mercia, including London, to Wessex but ceded vast tracts of England to the Danes whose extensive settlements endured and whose laws and institutions were never assimilated to those of the rest of the country until the Norman conquest. The only

effective measure of organization and discipline ever imposed on England in pre-Norman times was that imposed by the Greek Archbishop Theodore, when, nearly a hundred years after the arrival of Augustine, he fixed the organization of the English Church in a framework which endures to this day. Theodore insisted on the bishops' responsibility for the tasks entrusted to them. This was the beginning of the parish system. Centuries were to be needed to perfect it, but the principle of attaching clergy to clearly defined districts and forbidding them to leave without permission was the first and necessary step on the road to the establishment of a truly national Church. The only effective step towards a cultural uniformity was that taken by Alfred when he inspired and himself assisted in the translation of Bede's history, the Commentaries of Boethius, and the Letters of Gregory the Great into English so that these Latin classics should form the cultural heritage of all educated Anglo-Saxons. The only effective political unity was that achieved under Alfred's son and grandson, Edward and Athelstan, but it was a unity imposed by force of arms and at the price of recognizing the virtual autonomy of the Danelaw and the virtual independence of Northumbria. Except in the south of England under Alfred and his immediate successors there was never a union of minds and hearts, and the reason is clear enough. No king of England, not even Athelstan, ever conferred enough in the way of positive benefits on his subjects or disposed of sufficient force to reconcile the territorial nobility to the loss of their independence or to create in the minds of the Church or the common people a really strong conviction that their security and comfort demanded their acceptance of the rule of the House of Cerdic over a united England.

Plainly, there was in the Anglo-Saxons a lack of political and military genius hardly compensated by their ready acceptance of the Roman Church discipline and their tolerance in the political sphere of a great variety of institutions and ideas. They created the bone structure of our national Church and most of our local government boundaries, but of their central government and constitutional system we have inherited nothing because there was nothing to inherit except the sheriff (the shire reeve), a functionary whose name serves to remind us

that there was no higher administrative unit than the shire, and whose function as the king's representative should instruct those who prefer to learn from the facts rather than the books that the only instrument of national government evolved by the Anglo-Saxons was a personal and irresponsible monarchy. The Anglo-Saxons never attempted to create central government, a national patriotism, or even a national army. Athelstan, the grandson of Alfred the Great, carried England to the highest point of power, unity, and influence which she ever attained under Anglo-Saxon rule, but only seven years after his death Norsemen from Ireland were ruling in York, and sixteen years after his death civil war broke out in England and the country was divided between two kings. The country was reunited in 959, but only at the price of the cession of the Lothians to Scotland and the grant of virtual independence to the Danelaw.

What has come down to us from our Anglo-Saxon forbears is our English language, our ecclesiastical provinces and dioceses, our county divisions, but above all our sturdy individualism and our incurable provincialism from which comes at once our aversion from the study of great issues and high politics and our almost heroic capacity for continuing in the most adverse circumstances the daily round and the common task. The life of the Anglo-Saxon thegns and the Anglo-Saxon village communities went on through the troubles of the ninth and tenth centuries relatively undisturbed. The country was conquered, reconquered, and conquered again. The Church was subjected to the constant pressure of revolutionary reform. Foreigners of all races occupied the seats of the mighty and were even raised to the kingship, but there was no social revolution and no economic upheaval. On the contrary, there was a progressive consolidation of the rights of all free men to their land on the terms on which their fathers had held it. What was freely ceded by the Crown to the Church and to the nobles was the jurisdiction and privilege previously belonging to the Crown. The pre-existing rights of the landholders were not affected.

Historians tell us of the great aggregation of estates which began in the ninth and tenth centuries and continued after the Norman Conquest. The fact is undoubted but it did not mean what it would mean to-day and still less what it would have

meant in the nineteenth century. Rights and profits previously held by the Crown might be ceded to an earl or a bishop, but the rights of the free peasants and the villagers on the land remained secure not only until but after the Norman Conquest. The social structure of the kingdom before and after the Conquest was, of course, essentially aristocratic. Every man must have a lord. That is only to say, however, that in the early centuries of our history just as much as to-day every one was under government. The mind of the tenth and eleventh century had not drawn the distinction between the rights of government and the rights of property. Rents and taxes were indistinguishable. Nevertheless, the 'landlord' was the lord *on* the land not lord *over* the land. Even in the village court the lord could only preside; he could not dictate. The court could only interpret and enforce the custom of the hundred or the manor and the verdict was given by suitors; there was no judge. Custom could only be changed by consent.

What remained lacking was peace and order, and between the death of our last great pre-Norman king, the Danish Cnut, and 1066, changes took place in England which reflect a growing dissatisfaction with the Anglo-Saxon monarchy among all classes. Power passed largely into the hands of the great earls who in their turn were divided among themselves. The old rivalry between Mercia, Northumbria, and the south reasserted itself and was enhanced by the standing quarrel between the old Anglo-Saxon and the new Norse nobility and the dislike of both for the French influence which surrounded Edward the Confessor. The splendour of Athelstan's reign and the power and prestige of Cnut's north-western empire were forgotten. The English kingdom was in dissolution. In the world of the eleventh century there was no place for rulers, however pious, who could not govern; the contest for power in Western Europe demanded much more than the intermittent assertion of personal influence over the baronage which was all that even the most powerful of the English kings had attempted. The Danish conqueror, Cnut, in a letter to his English Council had taken credit for having rescued England from 'those nations and peoples who, had it been in their power, would have deprived us both of our kingdom and our life.' He had

done this by root and branch administrative reforms, the creation of a standing army, and a fleet of sixteen warships. This dynamic conception of the task of government died with the return of the Anglo-Saxon dynasty. Because he was either unable or unwilling to govern, Edward the Confessor was the last Anglo-Saxon to rule over the Anglo-Saxons. On his death in 1066 England was surrounded with powerful and hostile forces, to which without an army, a fleet, or a government, no resistance was possible. There were, in the circumstances, none who wished to see on the throne of England another member of the old ruling house or even of the Anglo-Saxon race. Harold Godwinson, an English earl of Danish descent, Harold Hadrada, the King of Norway, and William, the Duke of Normandy, were the only claimants.

Of the two Harolds the rebellious earl had more support than the Norwegian king, although Earl Harold's brother was with Harold Hadrada and many in Northumbria probably supported him. As between Earl Harold and William of Normandy the nobles and the townsmen were prepared to support whichever could offer stable government. William won his battle and is therefore called the Conqueror, but not because he conquered England but because he conquered Harold, when his title was at once recognized by the general body of nobles and churchmen.

The battle of Hastings was a decisive battle, but it was not the conquest of a country. It was a conquest of power by a man well fitted for it, and in those days power inevitably passed into such hands. Cnut, a man as able and powerful as Charlemagne's successor, Otto, had been one such; William of Normandy was another. He was a man of genius, sprung from one of those races of genius that appear so often in the spring-time of a civilization. To compare the Normans of the eleventh century with the Athenians would seem ridiculous, yet it is none the less the nearest comparison. Of the objective achievement they have left only their superb architecture in England, northern France, and Sicily. Their contemporary achievements, however, changed, or to be more accurate preserved, the face of Europe. They maintained the French tongue, the Christian religion, and the Roman tradition against the Scandinavian invaders of Northern Europe and against the rising

power of the Moslems in the Mediterranean. They tried to secure the outposts of the Roman Empire for the rising civilization of Europe. By uniting the thrones of England and Normandy William consolidated the work of his people and brought England finally into the European system.

The significant thing about the Norman rule was not that it was Norman—it was a very mixed force which came over with William and some of his most powerful supporters were from Brittany and Picardy—but that it gave England a government, an administrative system, and an army, and at the same time a reformed church subject to the discipline of the canon law. As a consequence England was secured against invasion and firmly linked to the continental system. In this way the inheritance of the English yeoman, the English villager, and the English burgess was preserved to them. The Anglo-Saxon nobility lost much, but no more than they deserved, for they had proved wanting in the capacity either to subdue the proud or to safeguard the humble.

But if the country was united and its people free, grave problems of government still remained for solution. Three main conflicts continued with varying emphasis throughout the medieval period: the conflict between the secular power and the Church, first over investitures, then over jurisdiction; the conflict over property between the English and the French claimants to the Duchy of Normandy and, finally, to the crowns of England and France; and the conflict between the barons, the lesser nobility, and the Crown for the balance of power in England itself. These struggles ended in the suicide of the old nobility in the fifteenth century; in the conquest of the Church by the Crown under the Tudors; and in the drawn battle between the Crown and the new landowning class, assisted by the City of London and the southern tradesmen in the seventeenth century. We shall, however, be guilty of a cardinal error of judgment if we read the history of England as the conscious working out of these conflicts to the issue we know. We must use large-scale histories. We must remember that the middle ages in England, say from A.D. 1000 down to the Wars of the Roses, formed as long a period as from the Wars of the Roses to the present day; and that the middle period, the thirteenth

century, was at least as great in achievement, as vigorous in tempo, and as creative artistically as any in the later epoch ; and that, throughout all the time from the Danish defeat until the Black Death in 1349, England was well populated and without grave social disorder save during the brief anarchic reign of Stephen. At the climax of the medieval period most of the characteristics of what we should to-day regard as happy society were present. We had a free church within a free state—that most necessary preservative of political liberty and personal freedom—a wide distribution of property, an economic order which knew neither wage nor chattel slavery, a system of international organization and moral order which kept warfare within limits which left the foundations of secular society secure, self-government in industry under the guild system, the rule of law impartially enforced, and some rough approach to political representation. The universities were crowded, town and country were prosperous, learning advanced. Finally, the dream of universal empire had given place to the reality of the nation state, that unique and enduring compromise between the claims of race and the needs of government.

On the debit side there was poverty, sickness, and violence. There was, side by side with much subtle philosophy and much political speculation destined to yield a harvest as deadly as any dragon's teeth, much ignorance, superstition, and immorality even among the clergy. It is a story which it is necessary to appraise, not to condemn. To-day, when material and mechanical progress has far outrun alike our morality and our intelligence, we should look back with astonishment rather than disgust to an age which, in the midst of such poverty and discomfort as we should find unbearable, and a violence of tempo which to-day serves only to drive men to despair, was able to work out and apply not some but all of those basic political and moral ideas which created that high European civilization which is to-day threatened with destruction.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MIDDLE AGE

THE FIRST step in the building of England as a nation-state was the establishment by William the Conqueror and his successors of a system intended to fulfil the greatest of secular needs, the need for government.

To distort the history of the past is to set up false signposts. Few distortions have done more harm than those which misdescribe the Norman feudal system as an alien tyranny from which the Anglo-Saxon genius needed only to be freed in order to progress. The first variant of this error was produced by Freeman and his disciples in the optimistic Victorian Age when liberal parliamentarianism was held to be the source of all our manifold virtues and the justification of our manifest destiny. According to this school, representative institutions were the peculiar discovery of the Anglo-Saxon peoples, who, since the fatal mischance which delivered them to the tyrannical Normans in 1066, engaged in a continuous, and continuously heroic, struggle to regain those lost liberties which their ancestors had brought from the woods of Germany. The historians of the last century went on to show how our power and dominion had grown in every age in proportion as we had repudiated, step by step, the prerogatives of popes and kings and come ever nearer to the conceptions of Victorian liberalism.

This tissue of absurdities might perhaps have survived the devastating criticism of the scientific historians beginning with Maitland and Round and ending in our day with Stenton, Douglas, and Powycke, because the only history known to ordinary Englishmen is that learnt by their schoolmasters from the preceding generation of teachers. In other words, what passes for historical common sense in each age is what was taught two generations earlier. The doctrines of Freeman

could not, however, survive the catastrophic consequences of two wars to end war which, in the process of destroying fifty millions of the common man, destroyed the common man's faith in the infallibility of his destroyers.

To-day, therefore, we are asked to see our history not as a succession of steps in an unending progress, but as a succession of struggles for power of which the Norman *coup de force* was one of the most cynical, and certainly the most spectacular, but by no means the first. We are to despise the Norman kings and their Plantagenet successors as part of a past which must be wholly despised because it must, on the modern reckoning, be wholly discarded before a brave new world can be built on those ruins which serve, on the modern primrose path, as the substitutes for the milestones of a more prosaic age.

It may be desirable in the atomic age to believe that you can build prosperity out of rubble. It is not, however, a belief which is possible for educated men, nor at all prudent even for politicians, since Westminster is as good a source of rubble as Mincing Lane. We must learn to read our history neither backwards nor forwards but in terms of the human problem as it presented itself to ordinary men and women at the time. In the case of the Norman Conquest we can, if we choose, know well enough how they viewed it. The world of the Anglo-Saxon had suffered bitterly not from too much government but from too little. The basic needs of society do not change. Men need peace and plenty at home and security against attack from without. This means a country large enough to be self-sufficient, with assured communications to enable goods to be exchanged, with a uniform system of just law, justly and uniformly applied, and with a defensive system strong enough to preserve order at home and invite the respect of other countries. Not one of these things had the Anglo-Saxons achieved. It was because they hoped that the Normans might confer benefits which the Anglo-Saxon kings had withheld that the villages and the towns accepted William after the battle of Hastings. It was because the Normans did in fact bring 'good peace' that no popular opposition to the dynasty ever developed.

The keys to the Norman triumph were three: dynamism, system, and force. Dynamism is the first essential of good

government and the rarest of political habits. The politician waits on the event: the statesman creates it. William created out of the warring elements in England a unified state with a rigid administrative system, effectively armed against baronial anarchy and foreign aggression. He achieved his end through the feudal system which effected not a social but a political revolution. The feudal system has nothing to do with masters and servants or with the economic subordination of one class to another. It disturbed neither social nor economic relationships. What it did was to require that all land in the country should be held of the Crown by dependent military tenure. The tenants-in-chief, both ecclesiastical and lay, held their land conditionally on the supply of so many knights for so many days' service. They could either maintain their knights out of the revenue of their own lands or create dependent military tenures of their own, or both. In practice both methods were usually employed. A tenant-in-chief might hold two hundred manors of the Crown for the service of one hundred and forty-five knights. Of these he might choose to maintain twenty-five himself on the proceeds of the lands he farmed himself. He might have three sub-tenants with large holdings, each responsible to him for the service of thirty knights, and the remainder of his estates might be divided into thirty separate knights' fees. Thus were established, at one and the same time, a baronage wholly dependent on the Crown and a highly trained mobile force available to the Crown in any emergency as a field force and used in time of peace in part for garrisoning the king's castles, and in part on castle guard at the headquarters of the great tenants-in-chief.

On the death of a tenant-in-chief, his heir, if a woman or a male under age, became a ward of the Crown, and in the case of a female heir the Crown could determine the succession by giving her in marriage. In any case, the heir before entering into his inheritance must pay an agreed 'relief' to the Crown and accept in addition his predecessor's obligations in respect of knight service. If there was no heir, or if an estate was forfeited by treason or other misconduct, it reverted (escheated) to the Crown. Through these feudal prerogatives of wardship, marriage, reliefs, and escheats the Crown remained in effective

control of the system, and in possession of adequate forces and adequate revenues for its administration. In the same way, and through the same machinery, the tenants-in-chief could regulate in every detail the affairs of their own estates or 'honours' as they were usually called.

The feudal system was in its beginnings at once complex, elastic, and efficient. It gave the common people peace and order and secured them in their pre-existing rights, kept the baronage under control, and gave the Crown a self-supporting system of local administration.

Side by side with the creation of a unified state went the reform of the Church, the re-establishment of the Church courts and Church councils, the reception of the canon law, the transfer of the bishops' sees from villages to towns, the reform of diocesan administration, the building of the great cathedrals, and a great monastic revival. Of these the most important was the legal sanction and institutional framework created for a truly independent and self-governing Church. Nowhere is the lesson of the Norman period more plain. The Anglo-Saxon kings were almost without exception men of great piety and the Anglo-Saxon Church had accepted the Roman doctrine with more than Celtic fervour. But no provision had been made for Church government. There was no discipline and no method of effective legislation. The Normans were not pious but they were practical. They knew that bishops and priests needed government as much as the laity, but that it must be a government of churchmen administering the Church's law without secular interference.

It was by deliberate and positive action that the Conqueror established alike the feudal system and the new relationship of Church and State. This last was the outstanding political contribution of the Middle Ages to political evolution, because it made possible a society at once free and healthy by providing a formula of reconciliation between the primacy of the spiritual in the world order and the needs of secular progress. Both actions reflected an intuitive political wisdom of which our contemporaries have lost the secret. To-day we substitute organization for institutions and a vast network of coercive legislation for that defined relationship between institutions

which allows free men to discharge their functions freely. Social freedom is, indeed, a conception which the modern world has almost entirely lost. The village community, the manor, the small and the great 'honours,' the parish, the diocese and the province, each was a self-governing institution limited only in its freedom by its few and defined obligations but not subject even theoretically to the political dictation of king or parliament or pope.

The statesmen of the Middle Ages possessed not only this much of wisdom but considerably more subtlety than most of their successors. When, for instance, the reformed papacy claimed in the Conqueror's time the sole right of appointing bishops and went on to claim sovereign rights over their appointees, it was obvious, since the lay hold on investitures and the political subordination of the bishops to the secular government was universal, that an issue had been raised which, if pressed to a strictly logical conclusion, must shake all Christendom. Yet the Middle Ages, so often denounced as violent and fanatical, found a solution whereby the bishops did homage to Crown for their temporalities but exercised their spiritual functions under the sole jurisdiction of the papacy. The solution will sound simple and easy only to those who do not reflect that in our age we have altogether failed to find a solution to this problem other than totalitarianism on the one hand and secularism on the other. We cannot even find a tolerable solution to the problem of maintaining our own church schools. The medieval solution of political freedom within a closed moral system is beyond or beneath our comprehension. We have forgotten in whose service alone is perfect freedom.

Equally subtle was the dual system through which in England under Normans and Plantagenets the Crown supplemented and in the end supplanted the feudal system as the chief instrument of government. Before the days of a money economy, the king's court and the great baronial and episcopal establishments were maintained by services rendered in kind, and, before the days of the siege engine and the cross-bow, the knight dominated the battlefield and the castle was impregnable. Under these conditions the feudal system needed to be supplemented only by the king's chancery or writing office and by his central

treasury. A true money economy was, however, on the way even in 1066, and very early in the twelfth century the king's court ceased to live on the king's lands or to be paid in kind. At the same time, the Crown began to find it preferable to take scutage or shield money in lieu of knight service in order to hire whole-time professional men-at-arms. This increased greatly the importance of the treasury (leading to the establishment of the exchequer) and of the sheriffs, who became the chief Crown agents for the collection of the revenues. It also upset the balance of the constitution to some extent. So long as the knights were the key to effective power, the interest of the Crown and baronage was the same. The power of both alike depended on keeping the feudal system working. When, however, the chief need of the Crown was money, and when that money was used to maintain professional military forces which must, if they were large, tend to make the Crown independent of the baronage, the attitude of the baronage to the Crown changed. Probably up to the end of Henry II's reign the interest of the barons was in a strong monarchy. Before the beginning of the thirteenth century they had come to wish for a weaker monarchy.

The central government responded by taking an ever-increasing interest in the rights of the people and in the liberties of the towns. The extension of royal justice, the grant of charters to boroughs and trade guilds, and the increasing political status given to the knights, served the triple purpose of redressing the balance of the constitution, promoting the welfare of the middle classes, and increasing the revenue of the Crown. We can see these forces beginning to operate in the reign of the Conqueror's second son, Henry I, the lion of justice, who extended the powers of the shire courts, was the first king to send travelling justices to the local courts to supersede the sheriff, and to attempt to turn the sheriffs into paid servants of the Crown. He also reorganized the exchequer, and was the first king to raise scutage.

The anarchy under Stephen, due rather to a disputed succession than to any breakdown of system, marked a further growth in the independence of the Church, whose support was the determining factor first in the accession of Stephen to the

throne and last in his virtual abdication two years before his death. With the succession by consent in 1154 of Henry II, the son of the Empress Matilda and thus the grandson of Henry I, progress began again and continues steadily until the end of the long reign of Edward I in 1307.

The progress was something very different from what we are sometimes led to think. Some constitutional historians with their eyes riveted on later centuries and their quarrels have looked, and have therefore found, in the century and a half that separated the second Henry from the second Edward, something which they describe as the evolution of parliament. Others, more cautious but no more wise, have seen in this period the establishment of the cardinal principle of the limited monarchy. Parliamentary government was, however, a conception not present in the Middle Ages, while the monarchy, on the other hand, had never been other than limited in its power but became not more so but less.

What really happened was something very different to what our history books used to tell us.

Firstly, the accession of Henry II brought into being the Angevin Empire, which lasted exactly fifty years from 1154 to 1204, and covers the period of the Third Crusade. This half-century placed a greater strain on the feudal system than the system could possibly sustain. Henry II, as Duke of Anjou and Duke of Normandy, reunited the English Crown with the Duchy of Normandy and added to these the Duchy of Anjou and its subsidiary fiefs and, through Henry's wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, most of south-western France. All this happened at a time when there were still only an embryonic and peripatetic central administration—really no more than the king's court wherever he happened to be—no assured revenues in money, no standing army, and no unconditional allegiance. These last three things, taken together, were decisive.

To-day we owe to the Crown in Parliament our unlimited allegiance. Under the feudal system the contract was limited and in the days of the Angevin Empire the contractual obligations of the baronage to the Crown were not only limited but in practice obscure. Henry II and his sons, Richard and John, were, as kings of England and dukes of Normandy, independent

sovereigns. (It is in virtue of the independent sovereignty of the dukes of Normandy that the Channel Islands still owe allegiance to the Crown, but not, constitutionally, to the Crown in Parliament.) As lords of Anjou, Poitou, and Aquitaine, the English kings owed homage to the kings of France. Almost all the French vassals of the English kings owed a double allegiance and some even of the great English tenants-in-chief and of the lesser baronage. Secondly, the knight service owed by the tenants-in-chief was limited not only in amount but in time. Knight service might provide an expeditionary force, but could not provide the English kings with a standing army to garrison their scattered continental possessions. The result was that the English kings were forced, in order to get money to pay their mercenary armies, to strain the feudal contract to breaking point. The position was greatly worsened both by the expense of the Third Crusade and by the even greater expense of finding Richard I's ransom. The reluctance of the English baronage either to fight for the king's overseas rights or to pay others to fight for them, was the real cause of the loss of Normandy in 1204.

History has been much falsified over this matter by the liberal historians who saw in John, brought to the signature of the great charter at Runnymede in 1215 by the rebellious baronage, a perjured despot frustrated in a plot to destroy the liberties of England. John, in fact, had decided, wisely if not heroically, to abandon Normandy and Anjou in 1204. He returned to England to continue the wise and prudent administration of his father. John's reign, so far from being an age of despotism, was the first great age of charter-granting to the rapidly growing towns, and, so far from John being a perjured and despised man, the leading American authority on this period of our constitutional history says with great truth that 'the Christian states of Western Europe for six hundred years after Charlemagne's death afford no example of a power . . . so unshakable'¹ as John's power in England. John, with the support of the towns and the common lawyers behind him, was so clearly master of England that he could, so long as he remained at peace, defy the pope, with whom he had quarrelled

¹ G. B. Adams, *Constitutional History of England* (Cape: revised edition, 1935).

in 1208, and the baronage at one and the same time. The threat of French intervention forced him to make terms with the pope but he did this with such skill and such general approval that his power was completely restored until he made his greatly mistaken attempt in 1214 to regain his French possessions. The disastrous defeat at Bouvines confirmed the wisdom of the decision which John himself had reached in 1204. He had reversed his decision because he had been able to form an offensive alliance with the emperor against the King of France. For the first time in our history, an English king staked his fortune on the armies of an ally, with the result with which later history has made us painfully familiar. Defeat abroad, demoralization at home—such, as ever, were the rewards of pursuing a continental policy without a continental army.

The consequence was a formidable baronial revolt in the course of which John was forced at the point of the sword to sign that reactionary feudal document known to schoolboys as Magna Carta, or the Great Charter. It was imposed on the king by a rebellious baronage to whose act of rebellion it gave an implied sanction, and its purpose was to limit the rights of the Crown not as against the people but as against the men who as tenants-in-chief of the Crown claimed to administer the nation's affairs.

In its positive provisions the Great Charter was still-born because it asked too much and gave too little. In this respect it is a classic of political imbecility. The baronage wanted two incompatible things: to make the great council of the tenants-in-chief the only effective governing instrument, and at the same time to limit the feudal dues paid by its members to the very nominal sums which had been customary a century before. Because they were so largely successful in this, they failed altogether in their effort at a reactionary constitutional revolution, which, if it had succeeded, would have thrown the country back to the anarchy which preceded the Conquest. The feudal system needed to be adjusted to provide the Crown not with a force of knights—a conception as out of date in 1215 as a force of archers would be to-day—and with the occasional feudal aids and reliefs, but with a fixed annual income of an amount

related not to what was customary in the eleventh century but to the contemporary price level. If the feudal system could not be so adjusted, the political power of the great feudal nobles must inevitably pass to those who accepted the financial responsibility for maintaining an efficient government.

This is in effect what happened. The Crown was forced back on the direct taxation of income and in due course on customs and excise duties. For this purpose the key classes were the knights of the shires and the burgesses of the towns, and the selfishness and ultra-conservatism of the great barons had the effect of producing an informal coalition between the knights and the burgesses, who were thus destined to become a far more powerful body than the baronage itself.

This coalition was one of the decisive factors in our political evolution. In most other countries, the knights (whom it is more sensible from the thirteenth century onward to think of as the squirearchy, together with those *nouveaux riches* who were already beginning, on the profits of trade, to turn themselves into country gentlemen) joined forces with the old nobility, leaving the towns to fight a losing battle for political freedom. In England it went the other way, and by the end of the sixteenth century these classes had displaced the old territorial nobility as the main governing class.

It would thus be profoundly unhistorical to say that the Great Charter had no historical consequences. Its consequences, unintended, were decisive, however, but they had nothing to do with representative government, the rule of law, or the limited monarchy. The Great Charter could not destroy the firmly rooted foundations of the rule of law which the strong Norman and Angevin kings had laid. It tried to arrest its further development and failed. The baronage had no conception at all of the principle of representation, nor had the Crown. When the baronage refused the responsibility for providing the necessary expense of government, the Crown had to treat directly with those who in any event would have to pay, with the mesne tenants, that is, and the tradesmen, but none who attended a council or parliament in the thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries came there as representatives to share in the government; they came by command to provide the king's

government, in which they had and desired to have no part at all, with the necessary funds, in order that it might be carried on without baronial interference, which neither the knights nor the burgesses wished to see. Least of all did the conception of the limited monarchy arise out of the Great Charter, because the contrary conception of an unlimited monarchy was never dreamt of at any point in the Middle Ages. The existence of an independent Church and the feudal, i.e. contractual, relationship between the Crown and the nobility alike precluded even the idea of an absolute monarchy. The Crown had never been and had never claimed to be above the law. The absolutism of the modern government, with its unlimited power of legislation, retrospective as well as prospective, was never even attempted by any medieval sovereign. The social order and the rights of all in the constitutional hierarchy were predetermined by custom, and the first great extension not of the powers but of the responsibilities of the Crown, through the progressive extension of the authority of the royal courts, was accepted only because it was undertaken to preserve the ancient rights of all classes from invasion by the rich and rapacious baronage through the illegitimate extension of the private baronial courts.

What gave the Great Charter such political and historical importance as it possessed in the Middle Ages was not its signature by King John (which by permission of the pope he repudiated almost immediately) but its acceptance in a modified form by the regents who acted for King John's infant successor, Henry III. To accept the principles of the Great Charter became the new formula, replacing the earlier formula of the Norman kings who periodically swore to accept the laws and customs of Edward the Confessor. Whereas, however, no one knew what the customs of Edward the Confessor's time had really been, the charter was a written document and, to the men of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a modern one.

The complete misunderstanding of its importance is due to the belief now no longer current but once almost universally held that the older monarchy was an irresponsible absolutism and that the binding of the Crown by any written instrument of public law was a step forward on the road to popular government. Actually the monarchy had always been narrowly

limited in its powers, and the limiting fiscal provisions of the charter compelled the Crown not to reduce but to extend its activities and its sphere of action. The existence of the document, however, in conjunction with the long minority of Henry III, did ensure that the conception of the Crown as the predominant partner, but still only a partner, in a working association of groups and institutions forming together the community of the realm, was never wholly lost until the middle of the eighteenth century, by which time the men of property had finally absorbed the powers of king, lords, and commons alike.

The baronage in 1215 had some measure of popular support due to the unpopularity of John's foreign wars and to the harshness of his taxation, but it is evident from the history of the succeeding reigns that the people on the whole preferred the monarchy to the junta of barons who periodically attempted to exercise the powers of the Crown. The judgment of the people was right. A weak king spelt weak government, but government by a committee of great nobles meant, in practice, no government at all. A weak king could be, and was, deposed. The baronage could be controlled only by the Crown. And the public temper demanded that it should be controlled. That is the key to the political history of the late Middle Ages. The English council or parliament was the council of a united nation whose liberties depended on the Crown and who had no wish to be balkanized by being dissolved once more into a congeries of semi-independent baronial principalities who could and would ride roughshod over customary tenures and royal charters.

This growing national unity and consciousness had its threat, however, to the monarchy, for there was a growing reaction against foreign wars, foreign favourites, foreign priests, and papal taxation, which was at its height in the long and troubled reign of Henry III because the king himself was at once loyal, pious, and poor. His brother was, by the pope's influence, elected king of the Romans, emperor-elect of the Holy Roman Empire. His own financial necessities led him along the same path, because in an alliance with the pope and the emperor against France lay the best hope of regaining his lost French territories.

The real importance of Simon de Montfort lies in the fact that his temporary triumph over the Crown was the first example of one of the most permanent factors in English, and therefore in world, history: our strange periodical revulsions from continental policies and commitments. This revulsion was shared by the barons, to whom the necessary feudal levies were a heavy expenditure; by the clergy, to whom the new papal policy meant tithes to Rome and foreign appointments to the great sees; and by the rising power of the towns, to whom foreign wars meant loss of trade. The sudden desertion of Henry III by all the ruling class under Simon was the first political landslide in our history. It was quickly repented, and the monarchy was restored; but the new king, Edward I, used the papal support not to make war on France, but to consolidate his hold on Scotland and Wales. In his long and noble reign England, freed for a time from civil and foreign war, knew the greatness of the thirteenth century.

It is hard in this age of unsatisfied desires to recapture the atmosphere of a century of fulfilment. The faith of the thirteenth century was not our faith; the belief in God had not then given place to the belief in man as the mainspring of human hopes. Its economy was not ours. The means of production were, as compared with to-day, ludicrously poor, but on the other hand they were in the hands of the many, not of the few. Even its politics were different, for the taxpayer was still a free agent with an effective right to decide the limits of his contribution. There was an appetite for learning unequalled before or since. In England alone there were over ten thousand university students, none of them enjoying the disadvantages of a sound commercial education.¹ The great cathedrals were built or building, and the glories of Gothic sculpture were rivalling in that field, for the first and last time, the highest achievements of Athens in her prime.

The same age saw the first beginnings of the European universities, and the beginnings of natural science. These achievements had been rivalled, though not surpassed, by the great classical civilization; but then it was only a superstructure

¹ But in 1209 a large number of students migrated from Oxford to Cambridge.

of cultivated leisure which had been built up on the foundation of slavery. To relate liberty to the rule of law, economic freedom to productivity, the universal moral law to the freedom of inquiry, and the international system to the fruitful development of nations had been the task of centuries of violent and passionate struggle. By the end of the thirteenth century the achievement was complete. The foundations of the modern world were laid. We are told in our history books how the rediscovery of the old learning, recaptured after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, set Europe aflame with inquiry; how the new learning kindled the embers of religious discontent; and how, suddenly, man threw off the shackles of the old dead world and emerged into the glare of modernity. 'A tale told by an idiot.' Dr. Hastings Rashdall has well described the thirteenth century as one of unparalleled intellectual activity. It was a dispensation of Providence that, when the treasures of the Eastern libraries became available, there were scores of universities and tens of thousands of scholars to study and preserve them. But in any case the infiltration of Greek and Eastern culture had begun centuries before. Arab culture was brought to Europe in the twelfth century by the Moors, and by the Emperor Frederick II, who brought the Greeks to his university of Naples, while Bologna was founded as early as 1116 for the study of Roman law. Last, and certainly not least, it was St. Thomas Aquinas, the accepted master of thirteenth-century thought, who had reasserted the principles of Aristotelian philosophy, and by virtue of those principles had set the seal on the achievement of this great century by bringing God within the order of nature. The supreme intellectual achievement of Christianity has been to find a place for both man and God within the order of nature. This achievement, forecast in the writings of St. Augustine, culminated in the Thomist philosophy, which showed how man's path to God lay, and must be found, through the sensible world. The Thomist synthesis was the great philosophic achievement of the first epoch of Christian civilization, and at that point in the world argument it must have seemed that the separation of Church and State, the great Christian contribution to the science of politics, was indefinitely secured against the twin challenges of a theocratic priesthood,

which had ruined the great Eastern civilizations, and the all-powerful Caesarism, making a religion of the State and its laws, which had stultified the possibility of spiritual development in the classical world.

At the end of the thirteenth century England was probably one of the richest countries of Europe: in architecture and sculpture, the great arts of the time, she was second to none. In painting and illuminated miniatures the work of the English artists rivals anything that has survived from France, Italy, or Spain; in embroidery, *opus anglicanum*, the English were unsurpassed. English bishops and friars played a part on the world stage not as sycophantic servants of a foreign authority, but as the honoured representatives of a society which still knew no distinction of nationality in the affairs of civilization. Simultaneously, the demand for English wool on the Continent laid the foundations of English industry, yet in a manner which ensured, for many generations to come, some measure of balance between town and country.¹ Finally, Edward I, one of the greatest of the English kings, laid the foundations by his laws alike of local government and national citizenship, and unified the kingdom by his conquest of Wales and the assertion of his feudal rights over the Scottish kings. In the reign of Edward I, too, was summoned the model parliament to approve the taxes proposed to them, and to voice the opinions of the towns and shires on any matters on which they might be consulted. The significance of the model parliament lies in the fact that such a large and representative body obeyed the king's command and was assembled with so little trouble and anxiety. For a brief moment there were no territorial divisions, no dynastic quarrels, and no popular grievances.

To the reign of Edward I we owe also a more important thing, the establishment of local police, of a militia, and of machinery for the enforcement of debts. In this reign were instituted the village constable, the volunteer soldier, the bailiff, and the justice of the peace, figures more truly representative

¹ Although we see here the beginnings of our dependence on export trade, and thus, in those disorderly centuries, of the need for dominating foreign markets which was to lead many of the poor to suffer substantially for the security of the rich.

of our genius for government than many who fill a larger place in our constitutional histories.

The Middle Ages were not, indeed, politically minded. Had they been, the deep political disturbances which marked the reigns of Richard I, John, and Henry III, to say nothing of the anarchy under Stephen, must have shattered the fabric of society just as it has been shattered in our own time in Russia and in Germany. The generality of men, however, lived in village communities or in towns and ordered their own affairs with no heed to the men round the king and their quarrels. It was in the hall mote or manor court, in the trade guilds or in the town mote, or as officers of the borough or the manor that we learnt surely and wisely the art and practice of self-government now so largely lost. In theory, while the towns and the guilds owed their self-government and their trading privileges directly to the Crown, the village was centred on the lord of the manor. The lord's court, however, had no power except to interpret and apply the custom of the manor, and the villages in practice regulated their own affairs according to an astonishingly detailed though varying code which predetermined the rights of inheritance, the marriage portion, the provisions to be made for the aged, the infirm, and the unmarried daughter, as well as all the customs of the manor in regard to husbandry. The lord of the manor, in the open-field villages, had his officers, not only to supervise the work of the manor court but to enforce the rules of the community in regard to all farming matters such as the use of the woodland, the common pastures, and the mill, the fencing of the common fields, the protection of the crops at night, and the safeguarding of cattle. These miscellaneous officers were, however, not men set over other men by the lord but villagers elected by the village meeting; the same was true of the different officers of the boroughs and the guilds. Through the discipline of these local obligations, imposed on all classes and voluntarily sustained, there came to birth in England, at the same time that the new English language was taking shape, a new spirit of independence, a self-reliance, and a humorous tolerance of life's misfortunes of which we see the dawning in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. We catch also the first echoes of the national scepticism

which has led us throughout all our history to sacrifice the future for the present. We were, for a brief moment under Edward I, the greatest of the medieval monarchies and the most Christian of the medieval peoples. The very next reign saw the loss of Scotland, the murder of the king, and the beginnings of a catastrophic decline in the prestige of the monarchy, while the reign of Edward III saw an open revolt against the authority of the Church and the first hint of grave social unrest (the Peasants' Revolt of 1381).

The causes of this collapse of government were complex, but among them the character of Edward II leading to the loss of Scotland, the abuses in the Church, the ruin caused by the Black Death, and the French wars lasting from 1338 to 1453 (known to-day as the Hundred Years War) were predominant. Probably the weakest link in the chain of authority was the alliance between Crown and Church. When abuses grew in the Church the monarchy inevitably shared in the unpopularity, just as to-day the parliamentary system declines or falls in popular estimation with the character of the interests controlling it. The growth of abuses in the medieval Church was due to three causes: the great increase in the wealth of the landowning classes and the great Cistercian monasteries by reason of the expansion of the wool and cloth trades; the accumulation of wealth by bequests under the 'dead hand' of an undying corporation; and the Black Death, which, like all economic catastrophes, made the rich richer and the poor poorer, and had also two other very important effects on the Church: it reduced the numbers of those in the great monastic institutions by more than half, thus doubling their wealth, and in extreme cases producing fantastic anomalies, and it inevitably led to a great lowering of the cultural level and moral tone of the priesthood.

It was to this greatest of natural catastrophes, more than to the defects of kings or priests or nobles, that the rapid disintegration of the medieval system in England was chiefly due. The Black Death carried off more than half the population of the country, at least two and a half millions in less than two years, out of a population of certainly not more than five millions and possibly even less. It had before it reached this

country entirely devastated the south of Europe. This catastrophe broke the sequence of English history by breaking for the first time since the Viking invasions the continuity of English social life. New times, no manners. Men in the prime of life were succeeded by their grandchildren; parishes were left without priests (instances are recorded where single parishes had as many as seven incumbents in one year) or were provided with priests insufficiently educated and hurriedly ordained. Education was disorganized, the care of children in all classes passed into the hands of those who could only speak the English tongue. Business, in the absence of lawyers capable of interpreting the suits before provincial courts, began to be conducted, even at the courts of Westminster, in English. Finally, a severe shortage of labour broke the feudal system at its base, substituted money wages for service in kind, and led to a widespread demand for 'rights' by the peasantry.

The agrarian troubles were accentuated by the French wars. The chroniclers recount with enthusiasm the splendour of our armies and their successes at Crécy and Poitiers; but the price paid for these victories was the growing dependence of the Crown upon the merchants, who alone could provide the money for the wars. The significant result was the cementing of the alliance between the landed gentry and the richer tradesmen in the towns. The first positive fruit of the alliance was characteristic—a move to reduce wages—the Statute of Labourers.

Looking back on the end of the thirteenth century, two modern historians say: 'We can see that a great change was coming over Europe. There was beginning to be something modern about the Middle Ages.'¹ That 'something modern' was, appropriately enough, the product of moral disorder, war, and a disorganized economic system.

¹ Carrington and Jackson, *History of England* (Cambridge University Press, 1934).

CHAPTER FOUR

INTIMATIONS OF MODERNITY

EVERY AGE produces new wine and inherits a legacy of old bottles—the relative strength of the wine and the bottles determines the character of the age. We must not, however, forget that it is the historians, not the actors themselves, who impose a pattern on events just as it is the artist who imposes immortality on men and moments otherwise destined to oblivion. The fifteenth century saw events which as solvents of the medieval society were destined to act with the force of a cataclysm—the practical application of gunpowder to the art of war, culminating in the invention of the infantry fire-arm, the match-lock or arquebus, in 1450, the invention of printing from movable type in 1440, the fall of the Eastern Empire and the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, and the discovery of the new world by Christopher Columbus in 1492. It was the age which saw the expansion east and north, and elsewhere the intensification, of the new learning and of new skills in the applied arts. The great cathedrals at Seville, Strasbourg, Upsala, Bruges, Cracow, and Orvieto, King's College Chapel, Cambridge, St. George's Chapel, Windsor, St. Mark's at Venice, and the Uspensky cathedral in the Kremlin at Moscow, date from the fifteenth century, as do the universities of Leipzig, St. Andrew's, Rostock, Louvain, Caen, Poitiers, Glasgow, Fribourg, Basle, Ingolstadt, Buda, Mayence, Tübingen, Copenhagen, Aberdeen, and Alcala. It was the great age of Italian architecture, painting, and sculpture, which brought the new Christian humanism to its highest artistic achievement, while by the end of the century the art of printing had begun to carry across Europe a new culture, which had chiefly grown up in the courts of Italian despots. This new culture has been described, and rightly we believe, as a lay culture. Frederick II

had long since claimed for the supreme secular power the supreme legislative authority, and had he defeated the papacy would have spread, at the point of the sword, a new culture to replace the old scholasticism. But it would not have been a lay culture. It was as the divinely ordained ruler of mankind that Frederick II claimed to make laws and commend studies, to define the functions of institutions and the relations between man and man. The new merchant communities of Italy made no claims to divine ordination. There is a limit even to the conceits of bankers. They were communities of men claiming the rights of men not to live their own lives (for that right they possessed: medieval man had never accepted any rigid social convention) but to stand in an individual and personal relation not only to their fellow men but to Church and State. The claim reflected neither a religious nor a political but a social revolution born not of intellectual revolt but of economic self-sufficiency. The men of the Renaissance proclaimed no political revolution but asserted an anarchy.

The hallmark of the age was versatility, curiosity, and an entire absence of anonymity. Men began to exchange thoughts of immortality for thoughts of posterity. The earth was claiming them. We can, of course, draw no firm dividing lines. To speak of the fifteenth as the century of the Renaissance and of the sixteenth as the century of the Reformation is misleading. To attempt to close the medieval and open the modern period at any point of time is worse than misleading; it is nonsensical. The web of history is woven without a void. Dante wrote at the very beginning of the fourteenth century but marked, for all the splendour of his vision, the end of an era. The empire and the papacy, the twin pillars of Dante's world-society, were already yielding their political dominance to the nation-state, and the new, national, middle-class, urbanized world of Chaucer and Boccaccio was coming into being. Long before the time of Chaucer, and contemporary with Dante, Franciscan teachers at Oxford were inspiring a wide range of free inquiry, observation, and experiment such as we associate with the great Renaissance figures in Italy more than a century later, while William of Ockham and John Wycliffe initiated in the fourteenth century that challenge to

the authority of the pope and the Church which only came to a crisis in Germany at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

It was as a theologian that William of Ockham attacked the papal claims; he held that the clergy should practise evangelical poverty, and in arguing that they should hold no property he would destroy the foundations of the territorial dominance and jurisdiction of the Church and leave it powerless against the secular power. His arguments, being theological, had no social or political influence at the time, but they reflected a spirit of free inquiry which in fact led the Oxford Franciscans to work on psychology, optics, and physics. They approached the theory of gravity, and one of William of Ockham's French pupils was the first to suggest that our earth moved with the planets.

By contrast John Wycliffe was more akin to the early puritans than to the humanists of the Renaissance. He was a sombre but not necessarily an admirable figure, who looked from the security first of an Oxford chair and then of a country rectory at the Church which supported him, and found it almost wholly bad. Our present age must, perforce, look back with some admiration on a more tolerant one which could contemplate with equanimity the spectacle of a Wycliffe so disenchanted yet never disendowed. As, however, Wycliffe's doctrine was that dominion was founded on grace, that only the virtuous, the elect, had any claim to anything, and that they had a claim to everything, he was perhaps untroubled by what to the less virtuous in all the succeeding centuries has seemed an inconsistent approach to the central problem of conscience. Certainly he inspired many good and sincere men to risk their lives in the cause of his doctrines.

It is not fanciful to say that the intellectual ferment and social unrest born of these far-ranging inquiries into the foundations of the medieval society reached a significant point at the turn of the century because it was precisely in the year 1401 that the English Parliament passed the statute for the burning of heretics (*de heretico comburendo*), a statute which was not to be repealed until the age of toleration, when the Cromwellian revolution had been liquidated and the Stuarts had returned to the throne.

The beginning of the fifteenth century was indeed the beginning of an unquiet time, for it was not only the intellectual foundations of the old order which were attacked. Prices and wages had doubled in the last fifty years of the fourteenth century, partly as the result of the labour shortage following the Black Death, and partly owing to the increase in money in circulation, due to importations of coin from France and Flanders by soldiers and traders. At the same time the disasters of the French wars had left the Crown without revenue. The clergy, both regular and secular, were in disrepute, and no reform could come from within, for the papacy was in schism and rival popes in Rome and Avignon disputed an authority gravely diminished. The monarchy, which had been strong in the early years of the reign of Edward III, was shaken by the disasters of the close of the reign, when the English lost all their French conquests except Calais, Bayonne, and Bordeaux. Edward fell ill, his son, the Black Prince, the victor of Poitiers, died, and the virtual ruler of the country was John of Gaunt. When Edward III died in 1377 he was succeeded by his grandson, a boy of ten, another stroke of chance almost as fatal as that which had led to the destruction of the achievement of Edward I by the weakness of Edward II.

These turmoils provided a challenge to the new mercantile classes.

All through the Middle Ages the constitutional pattern had been clear. The men of property had asked to be left alone and to be allowed to do as they wished on their own estates through the machinery of their own courts. The Crown had slowly extended its authority with the support of the common people. We must not, of course, picture the baronage as ordinarily, or, still less, consciously, oppressive or unjust, or the Crown as consciously protecting the poor against the rich. By and large, all classes had lived and worked together in tolerable harmony through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The medieval community of the realm was a real thing. It was almost certainly the need of the Crown for money which first prompted royal interest in the towns and guilds and in the creation of local machinery for collecting taxes from the shires. The baronage, for its part, was only moved to try to extend its

powers by exactions genuinely felt to be unjust or excessive. The baronage, however, had overplayed its hand in attempting in 1215, in 1248, and in 1264 to seize the supreme power. In so doing it had forced the Crown to make itself politically independent of the baronage, and to create out of the officers of the household and of the royal courts an administrative system which slowly but surely supplanted the old feudal council. For these reasons it is probably true to say that up to the time of the Black Death, the government of England was heading in the direction of absolutism.

It is true that the Commons had acquired as early as the reign of Edward I some right to be consulted about taxation, and the right to present petitions, and also, since 1322 (from the famous Statute of York), some vague rights in regard to legislation, but the right to raise taxes other than those customary had never belonged to the Crown. It was a right which the Crown was in process of acquiring and was in practice to acquire with virtually no limitation, not a right which was in process of being limited. It was the same with legislation. The Crown originally could only declare what the law was. As late as the reign of Henry II the whole dispute with Becket over the Constitutions of Clarendon had rested not on the merits of the king's proposals, but on the question whether the Constitutions did in fact represent the ancient customs of the realm, in which case they must be accepted, or whether they did not, in which case they were in theory invalid. The point was again exemplified in 1215. The head and front of John's offence was that he had overridden feudal customs and broken the feudal contract. Magna Carta was not a new body of law but (professedly) a restatement of unalterable law. By the middle of the fourteenth century the Crown had in practice acquired powers of legislation to which the Commons might have had to record their consent but over which they had no veto, if only because, although the burgesses were, in fact as well as in theory, freely chosen by the towns, the towns could have their charters revoked by the Crown if the burgesses misbehaved, while the knights of the shire were in no sense representative or elected. They were little more than nominees of the sheriffs, who were themselves appointed by the Crown.

It is, indeed, necessary to realize that a great deal of what used loosely to be called constitutional progress in the fourteenth century was really a movement away from the conception that the State is the creation of an antecedent and therefore unalterable law towards the late Tudor conception of the State as the supreme maker of the law. It was to assist in this revolutionary change that representative persons, prelates, magnates, knights, and burgesses were summoned to Parliament, but they did not, in the fourteenth century, constitute Parliament; they were summoned to something, to the council meeting in presence of the king, which was already a Parliament. The Commons, at any rate, were summoned not to decide but to consent to the decisions, and, in practice, to record them and to publicize them and in so doing to facilitate the raising of the money to implement them.

We must remember further that the Commons was hardly a House of Parliament even by the time of Henry VII. The knights and burgesses achieved a corporate entity as a 'house,' with, by the fifteenth century, a speaker, precisely because they were not Parliament. They were an adjunct, with a house of their own, and we should think of them rather as presenting petitions to a Parliament than as part of a Parliament presenting petitions to a government. The lords, temporal and spiritual, on the contrary, could by the fifteenth century be described as Parliament and the Commons in the fifteenth-century Parliament Chamber had no right to speak to Parliament except through their speaker, who was a royal nominee.

At the end of the fourteenth century the trend towards monarchical absolutism was very suddenly, though only temporarily, arrested. The causes are clearly marked.

The strictly customary and hereditary systems of land tenure had for centuries ensured a surplus of labour provided by the slow but steady natural increase in the population, which fed the growing towns and provided men for the new industries and, incidentally, for the great royal industry of continental warfare. When, as the result of the Black Death, the labour shortage became acute, the towns were threatened with wage demands which would ruin the burgesses, and the countryside faced ruin from which it could only be rescued by a great change-over to

sheep farming. This, however, involved enclosures and the invasion of tenants' rights and a change-over from villeinage to money wages. This in turn held a threat to the prosperity of the propertied classes. There was thus, and for the first time, a simultaneous desire by the great nobles, the small landowners, and the trading classes for a strong central government with unlimited powers which must be consistently exercised both in the interests of that trade in which, for the first time, all classes were engaged and to maintain order which was gravely threatened by the new individualism of commerce and commercial agriculture and the breakdown of the old customary sanctions. Neither men nor money could in the new conditions be spared for wars abroad. These conditions coincided with the impotent old age of Edward III, the defeats in France, the death of the Black Prince, and the minority of Richard II, and during this period the men of property deliberately sought to extend, and for a time extended, their political power through the machinery of Parliament.

Nevertheless, nothing was constitutionally secured. By astute manœuvres Richard II for eight years regained almost all the power of his great ancestors and appeared, when he persuaded his last Parliament to give him great revenues for life, to have found a method of preserving absolutism under constitutional forms. He went further, and by keeping a small committee of the Parliament, chosen by himself, in being after Parliament was dissolved, he appeared to have found a way of giving the appearance of popular consent to his executive acts. That this was his immediate intention admits of no doubt, for he proceeded to use this committee to cover, with the appearances of constitutional rectitude, the confiscation of the great Lancastrian estates which would otherwise have fallen to the exiled Henry of Lancaster, Earl of Hereford, on the death of the Duke of Lancaster on 3rd February 1399.

This was an attack on property and therefore, in the world of the fourteenth century, an attack on the recognized foundation of law and order. There is some evidence that Richard himself was aware of this. In the last years of his reign he set up innumerable temporary commissions, both judicial and administrative, with local authority, and exacted special oaths

of loyalty from shires and towns, many of which, incidentally, were forced to buy themselves back into the king's pleasure. Neither Richard's talents, however, nor his character were equal to his ambition. He was neither capable of personal rule nor would he have been trusted to exercise it *pro bono publico*. The Lancastrian revolution which placed Henry of Lancaster on the throne and contrived the murder of Richard II was the inevitable sequel.

Although almost bloodless, this was not a parliamentary revolution. Parliament had never claimed to govern, even when the Lords Appellant, the lords who led the fight against Richard II's party in 1387, stated in their accusation that the law of the land was only properly made 'in Parliament by the King and the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and all the Commonalty of the Realm.' They were not 'claiming for the organ they controlled a legislative omniscience but rather an unbounded jurisdiction, an illimitable right to try and condemn.'¹ Eventually, however, Henry IV was unwilling to concede and he was at great pains to assume the crown before Parliament met and to dismiss Parliament before it could attempt to confer the throne upon him. Indeed, he acted on the probably correct assumption that Richard's abdication and his own succession to the throne automatically brought the Parliament, which had been summoned in Richard's name, to an end. When it met again a week later it was a new Parliament summoned by Henry IV of England. It was, therefore, as Henry had intended, his servant and not his master. The magic of the old legitimist feudal monarchy was nevertheless gone, and never returned. Until after the rebellion of 1745 no king or queen of England was ever again secure. The assassin's path to the throne cannot be quickly retraced.

It is a senseless abuse of language to talk about constitutional progress in the fifteenth century in England. The change was that a monarchy which had lost its magic depended now and henceforward solely on force. 'There is no act or occasion which can be pointed to as explicitly giving to the Lancastrian dynasty a statutory right or as binding them to any specific form of government.' In fact, neither Henry IV, Edward IV,

¹ K. Pickthorn, *Henry VII* (Cambridge University Press, 1949).

Richard III, or Henry Tudor had any right but the right of conquest. It followed inevitably that the notables gained in relative power, and had they proved capable of wise or even firm government, history might have been different. The actual result, however, was a great decline in the public respect for Parliament which by the second half of the fifteenth century had become wholly unimportant. Side by side with the decline in the repute of Parliament went the decline in the repute of the Great Council. In the circumstances the Crown gained in power but lost in respect. It could be, and was, at the mercy of any combination of forces. It survived for comparatively long periods because of the great weakness of those forces, and most notably the Church and the old nobility, which had formerly divided the power with the Crown under sanctions at once divine and customary.

In all this ears attuned to the warnings of history may find much of interest to-day. There is some reason to think that in 1399 the men of property, who supported Henry of Lancaster almost unanimously, had no idea but to preserve the rights of property against the rapacious and predatory eccentric who sat on the throne. It is not even certain that Henry himself, when he landed in England, intended more than to make good his rights to his estates. When all the power in the kingdom came to him, perhaps even without the asking, he assumed it and was allowed to do so without challenge. The men of property, having saved their property, were no longer politically interested. With the breakdown of the feudal relationship, and the insecurity of title fostered by such a usurpation, wealth and private property had ceased to stand in any organized relation to the State; they became, as in our own day, not the subject-matter of government but merely its instrument.

Under the medieval system the sole concern of government at the centre had been the proper functioning of the hierarchy of institutions, so that great services were exacted from great wealth and its power of oppression kept within bounds by custom supplemented by royal justice. The whole complex relationship between the great fiefs, lay and ecclesiastical, and the Crown, and between the great families and the king, was kept under review, for such institutions and such men were

neither above nor beneath the government but were an integrated part of a complex governing machine. It was in and through the feudal system that all classes shared and felt themselves to share in the community of the realm. Time and trade had destroyed that old community. By the middle of the fifteenth century in England the yeoman, the merchant, and the squire had acquired much of the once responsible wealth of the great feudal nobles, but they had neither acquired, nor sought, any correlative responsibility. They registered in Parliament certain legislative acts of the Crown at the Crown's request, but except in moments of revolution they sought no initiative or responsibility. The old nobility still shared in the government at the centre but as irresponsible magnates rather than as responsible members of a community. The Crown depended on them no longer for military service, not even for revenues which came more largely from customs and excise. Such force as they possessed came not from their public position but from their private wealth which enabled them to hire men-at-arms and to fight for or against the Crown. Their opportunity came after 1453. So long as the Crown could live, as Henry V and for a time Henry VI did, on the tribute drawn from their French conquests, and as long, therefore, as the Crown disposed of powerful mercenary forces in its own pay, the Crown was secure. By 1453 all Henry V's conquests had been lost; only Calais remained. The monarchy which had lost its magic had now lost its money, and the old nobility which had been increasingly restive and rebellious plunged the country into civil war in 1460.

Henry VI himself was murdered in 1471 (he had been deposed ten years earlier and only restored in 1470); his son Edward was murdered in the same year. Clarence, Edward IV's brother, was murdered in 1478 and the two children of Edward IV in 1483. Richard III, who had seized the throne on the death of Edward in that year, was betrayed by Lord Stanley and killed by Henry Tudor at the battle of Bosworth in 1485. Stanley put the crown on Tudor's head. Tudor showed his gratitude by executing Stanley's cousin.

The Wars of the Roses are surprising rather for their violence and ruthlessness than for anything else. The rival factions gave

no quarter. It marked the beginning of an age when every man seeking political power took his life in his hands. It is impossible to detect even the shadow of a principle behind the passionate vindictiveness of the rival factions. Neither Yorkists nor Lancastrians seriously claimed the throne as a right. Neither faction pretended, as men seeking power at least pretend to-day, to have at their disposal any peculiar specific capable of benefiting their fellow men. But they had the new and powerful cannon. Artillery brought the age of chivalry to an end. In the arbitrary and unlimited licence which the men of wealth, and therefore of military power, extended to themselves in this conflict we are forced to see the first fruits of the Renaissance, of that passionate individualism which in the sphere of creative art gave, as it seemed, a new dignity to man but which, applied to the pursuit of political power, became wholly destructive not only of private but of public morality.

It is difficult to accept the once conventional view that the Wars of the Roses were something which concerned only a few families, which passed almost unnoticed by the general body of the people. Very large forces were employed, if we accept contemporary accounts, as we must. They cannot have been compelled to fight. Warfare clearly had become a trade which men followed willingly for private gain and all classes must have been concerned in it. Parliament was not suppressed: it met frequently, only to be prorogued. The Commons presented virtually no petitions and showed itself the complaisant registrar of successive usurpations. The people were partners, not victims, in the prevailing anarchy which provided them with a brave and colourful parade and no little excitement. All established things were in disrepute as the new age dawned and Henry Tudor, without fame, or fortune, or rights, ascended a throne to which as the result of five murders no other adult claimant was to be found. A false view of man's relationship with the universe was to have different repercussions in politics and in art. The passion which illuminates a moment destroys a world.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE MEDIEVAL SYSTEM

THE FIRST half of the sixteenth century in England saw the completion of that destruction of the medieval system which the fifteenth century had begun and the creation, mainly deliberate, of what we should call to-day a capitalistic totalitarian state. Such a state cannot endure because the twin conceptions on which it is founded are mutually destructive. The energy of the free *entrepreneur*, be he manufacturer, merchant, or landlord, will not indefinitely tolerate, and indeed cannot survive under, an all-powerful centralized and irresponsible dictatorship. There are, however, times of social, economic, and intellectual ferment when the destruction of an old system appears to serve the needs of many interests otherwise conflicting. So it was in France in 1789, in Russia in 1917, and in Germany in the 1930s, and so also in England under Henry VII and Henry VIII. Socially, economically, intellectually, and spiritually, Englishmen were being uprooted at the beginning of the sixteenth century from their traditional habits and beliefs by forces long at work below the surface but now reaching out towards a turbulent and destructive domination.

Agriculture, which since pre-Norman times had been a way of life for a network of self-sufficient communities, had come to be a way of enrichment for individuals. The growth of a native textile industry had created the new situation. The sheep farmer was invading the cornfields. The merchant and the craft guilds had become close corporations of employers, and journeymen's guilds had arisen to defend the rights of a new class of propertyless workmen. The craft guilds had reflected the medieval spirit of mutual aid which sought to establish among the craftsmen as nearly as possible a spirit of complete

equality. They had reproduced in the towns the forces at work in the village community. It was the gradual evolution of a capitalist structure of industry which was destructive of the old relationship. The journeymen saw themselves sinking into the position of hired workers, shut out from the ranks of the new employing class who, under the stress of economic pressure and the competition for the export trade, were taking the place of the free co-operative associations of the self-employed as the normal agents of production. This new class came more and more to look, as the mercantile system developed, to the central government, not to the township and to its own guilds, for protection. The Navigation Acts, the embargo on the export of many of the raw materials of production, and the diplomatic and commercial privileges conferred by the Crown on such chartered bodies as the Merchant Adventurers and the Merchant Staplers were the effective bulwarks of our overseas trade. Side by side with the development of capitalism in industry came the new capitalist agriculture. The landless labourers, working for hire on the rapidly growing enclosures, represent the first decisive triumph in the history of our money power over human dignity. But, in the short run, the gain outbalanced the loss. It was an age of expansion; the majority of the dispossessed poured into the towns and the ports and earned more in the new manufactories and on the seas than they had ever dreamed of.

The extent to which those engaged, and perhaps still more those who wished to be engaged, in the new capitalist enterprises found their opportunity for private fortune dependent on government action was one of the two principal reasons for that revolution in government which we associate with the Tudor monarchy. The second was the quarrel between Church and State which broke out in the reign of Henry VIII and in one form or another dominated English politics from 1529 to 1688. We cannot, however, understand the Reformation in any of its phases unless we understand something of the constitutional revolution which largely preceded it.

The essential Tudor achievements in the political sphere were the substitution of a national for a feudal administration and the substitution of an omniscient legislating sovereignty

for a state under the law. The revolution was 'notional' rather than legal or institutional, and rested on consent rather than force. The men of property, and the acquisitive who wished to acquire property, wanted order and were prepared to support a strong central government, and a powerful, dynamic, sovereign executive, with an efficient local administration behind it, was prepared to enforce the one and supply the other.

Of the one hundred and twenty-four public acts passed in the reign of Henry VII the great majority were certainly legislation of the traditional pattern, affirming the pre-existing common law but making better provision for its application to the circumstances of the age. There was, however, a clear beginning, in Henry VII's reign, of that other kind of law, the making of which involved changes in fundamental law and making illegal what had previously been legal. There was also a great extension in the scope of government activity and a great strengthening of its machinery to enable it to act quickly and with the certainty that its actions would not be challenged.

It can be argued, and almost certainly correctly, that even those Acts of Henry VII which have most clearly the appearance of being really legislative, of making new law or destroying old law, were not so regarded by the lawyers at the time. As late as 1604 the speaker of the House of Commons was to argue that the common law, being the natural law, was immutable. The change that came about in Henry VII's reign was in the public temper in regard to legislation. Men not only tolerated but demanded what to every one except the lawyers were certainly new laws; equally they demanded the destruction of old laws. The Navigation Acts, the Acts for the Maintenance of Husbandry, Acts prescribing minimum hours of labour and maximum wages, above all the so-called *De Facto* Act determining the conditions of allegiance in certain circumstances, the Act allowing trial and sentence without indictment in certain circumstances, and the Acts restricting or abolishing rights of local legislation, or legislation by such corporations as guilds, reflected, whatever else, a willingness to see the sovereign armed with new powers to do many more things more effectively.

The chosen instruments of the more active and more effective

sovereignty were the prerogative court—the famous Star Chamber Court whose powers were defined anew and placed beyond dispute or challenge by the common lawyers by one of Henry VII's most famous Acts—and the justices of the peace whose powers and duties were extended by every one of Henry VII's seven Parliaments. The justices of the peace, 'collectively and individually, owed their creation to the Crown, and the whole weight of the law placed them under the control of the king's judges and of his council.' ¹

Armed with almost unlimited authority and with vast responsibilities which impinged on the private life and business activities of the whole community, these justices were at once unpaid and supported by no kind of military or police force. They did what the king required of them because they needed the king as much as the king needed them and because they were men of local weight and influence. They were the new men representing the rising force of property derived from capitalist agriculture and mercantile adventure and, except in regard to enclosures, were heart and soul behind the new monarchy of which they were at once the creators and the creatures. These were the men with whose consent, if not at whose behest, the Church was to be subordinated to an omniscient secular sovereignty and who in the first half of the next century were to claim that omniscient sovereignty for themselves. We can understand nothing of our history if we do not understand this. They exercised and defined authority in their districts and came to Parliament to serve the same master in Parliament by virtue of their weight of influence as men of property among the small number of other men of property who alone were represented or had power in the country.

It was their great good fortune, though not necessarily that of their fellow countrymen or of posterity, that the rise to power of the new men and the new dynasty coincided with the spread of the new Renaissance culture and the new theological speculations imported from the Continent to Cambridge. The solvent effects of the new secularism and the new religion combined to create a psychological climate in which revolutionary

¹ K. Pickthorn, *op. cit.*, page 67.

notions tending to a transfer of power and property from medieval institutions to modern individuals appeared to be a step forward on the path of progress and even, paradoxically enough, appeared to quite a number of people to be a measure of social justice. Unfortunately the prejudices and passions of Catholics and Protestants have for long combined to confuse the outlines of the story.

Catholic historians have tended to present the English Reformation as, in essence, a political event and have been at pains to point out that the new learning was introduced by Catholic scholars before there was any challenge to the Roman authority. All the men of the Tudor period were the heirs of that activity, Latimer, the most famous of Protestant, as much as Thomas More, the most famous of Catholic, martyrs, and equally with both of them Erasmus, who, like the great majority of men everywhere, was strongly disinclined to be a martyr. The contribution of the Renaissance to thought was not Protestantism but humanism and secularism. The bitterest opponent of humanism was Martin Luther; the bitterest opponent of secularism was Calvin. All this is true. The once popular view, that the Reformation followed the Renaissance of learning as the day the night, is out of all relation to the facts. Christian humanism, perhaps the finest flower of the Renaissance, was wholly Catholic in its inspiration and influence and its obverse, the tempestuous assertion of the rights and self-sufficiency of the individual mind and will, was for different reasons equally abhorrent to Luther and to Calvin. Yet, with the partial exception of Ireland and Scotland, the Reformation throughout Europe succeeded where the reformers held the political power and failed when they did not. This is the clearest proof not that the Reformation was a mere political expedient but that the solvent effects of the new learning had led by the middle of the fifteenth century to a widespread scepticism. To this scepticism Puritanism was to make one reply and the counter-Reformation another. But into both these movements the iron had entered. Both were to arm themselves with a sword which was not the sword of the spirit. The savagery of man unchained from his long past was to be tamed afresh by new disciplines more rigid, more ascetic, more

aggressive, and more ruthless than any within the armoury of the medieval papacy or empire. Nor was the ruthlessness without cause, because the same century which saw the spiritual forces of Geneva and Rome burst into a fierce, destroying flame saw the appearance on the stage of history of post-Renaissance man, urban but not urbane, proud, reckless, and disenchanted. Elizabeth's was to be the age of Hamlet, as well as of Ignatius and Calvin. The pursuit of all knowledge, the recognition of all experience, the pursuit of beauty for its own sake, these things gave to the heirs of the Renaissance their audacity in speculation, their creative energy, their hedonism, and their fatal cynicism. Many of these qualities seemed typified for his contemporaries in Henry VIII, the brilliant young prince who ascended the throne in 1509 at the age of eighteen.

England in 1509 was beginning to recover her position as a great European power. This had been the work of Henry VII. A generation before, the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella had united Spain; later Louis XI and Charles VIII had united France by adding to the Crown the provinces of Burgundy, Anjou, Provence, and Brittany. Beyond stretched the disputable territory of the empire, ruled in Henry VIII's time by Charles V. The boundaries of the empire corresponded roughly with those of pre-war Germany and Austria combined, with the addition of Savoy, Genoa, and the Milanese. To the east of the empire lay Poland; Hungary and the Ottoman Turks spread over the Balkans. Italy was a geographical expression, its destinies depending on the policies of the Papal State, the republic of Venice and the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily, and on the merchant princes who ruled in Milan and Florence. On this Italian chessboard France and Spain, and later France and the empire (for Spain and the empire both fell to Charles V, the first by inheritance and the second by election), played recklessly for high stakes. There were rich prizes in privilege and power, and Henry VII had encircled England by a chain of alternating and sometimes simultaneous alliances with the rival combatants, in return for which negative assistance (for he gave neither ships nor men) he received trading privileges and subsidies. As the combatants grew poorer, although not much, for the wars of the time did no

permanent damage to trade or agriculture, England had grown richer, and the price of Henry's abstention from the conflict grew higher. It was not an honourable role. Honour is not easily combined with profit nor peace with either. Henry VIII, guided by Wolsey, sought to play a more decisive part. He joined the papacy and the Holy League against France and won victories on French soil. Later he transferred himself to France, and then, when France threatened the papal states, allied himself to Charles V, and finally, though too late, to France again. This proved a fatal error. The French were routed, and the emperor turned on Rome and made the pope, Clement VII, his captive. This came when the long negotiations by Wolsey for the annulment of Henry's marriage with Catherine of Aragon (the emperor's aunt) were coming to a head. Wolsey had played for the independence of the papacy, hoping in return for his support to get a favourable decision on the king's marriage. He failed, and fell from power. The king broke off negotiations with Rome and married Anne Boleyn. The 'Reformation Parliament' registered, between 1529 and 1536, the successive approaches of Henry VIII and his advisers towards a more complete breach with Rome.

The reasons behind the fateful divorce of Catherine of Aragon were at once dynastic and personal. Henry VIII had not only wished by founding a dynasty to be a candidate for imperial power, but to make himself the acknowledged equal of the greatest prince in the world. Much of his political philosophy—the philosophy, that is, forced on the attention of his ambitious sensuality first by Wolsey and then by Cranmer and Cromwell—was imperialist. But an imperial dynasty must be secure and diplomatically effective and he must, therefore, as he saw it, have one son at least, and quickly. By 1527 the international situation made this, the king's 'great matter,' as contemporaries spoke of it, most urgent. Henry was prepared to abrogate any law, ecclesiastical or civil, in order to marry Anne, the sister of his former mistress Mary Boleyn.

There is some reason for thinking that Henry VIII, there is every reason to know that Wolsey, then the papal legate as well as the all-powerful chief minister, hoped to persuade the pope to annul the marriage. There is, however, no good

reason for supposing that the breach with Rome would or could have been permanently avoided. As it was, the end came with five Acts of decisive importance: the Act of Restraint of Appeals (1533), which forbade appeals to Rome; the Act of Supremacy (1534), which made Henry VIII head of the Church in England; an Act diverting papal revenues to the Treasury; and two Acts (1536 and 1539), dissolving the monasteries.

It is not true to say that the consent of Parliament to the breach with Rome was obtained by the promise, or even the hope, of spoils arising from the secularization of the monastic lands, nor, as has been said so often, that the doctrinal change which followed the breach with Rome was unintended. That the Church is One, Catholic and Apostolic, is a cardinal doctrine of the Roman Church, which was the Church in England until the Reformation; the primacy of the spiritual in the world order, denied equally by Henry VIII and Cranmer, was no legal technicality but the very principle which, asserted by the popes and denied by the emperors, had led to the conflict which had occupied the minds and inflamed the passions of all throughout the Middle Ages. This conflict and its meaning must have been present to the mind of every one of the actors in the drama of the English Reformation. This conflict had been won by the medieval, and was then, and for ever since, lost by sixteenth-century papacy. These things were not, except in form, matters of organization and government, but matters affecting deeply and permanently the form and character of Western European civilization. The differences which distinguish the mind and temper of the Middle Ages from that of the modern world derive at least as much from the primacy of the spiritual in the world order as from any differences as to the nature of grace or the validity of Protestant orders, if only for the reason that once the supreme and indefeasible authority of the teaching Church was denied, the doctrines of the English Church, whether orthodox or heretical by definition, rested on a private judgment and, in Tudor times, on the monarch's judgment alone. Even, therefore, where the matter of belief remained the same, the act of belief was different.¹

¹ I am indebted to the Reverend Philip Hughes for this point—one of very great importance.

Worst of all, the reality of that freedom which is possible only within a closed moral system was lost. The possible alternative of an anarchy resting on the unfettered private judgment of individuals was abandoned in favour of the complete subordination of the individual to a state made in a few short years omniscient, and therefore tyrannical, to a degree unknown in any previous age of English history. Catholics and Protestants and Dissenters alike were to suffer under this new and disagreeable dispensation.

The causes of a transformation so vast and decisive were many, and few even of the most learned will agree as to the weight to be given to the different influences at work.

The challenge to papal jurisdiction in England had certainly been long prepared by the repeated conflicts over temporalities and the rights of appointment. The last year of Edward I's reign saw the first of a long series of statutes designed to check and limit the pope's jurisdiction and rights of appointment to English sees and benefices. The pressure for these measures came from below. The famous Statutes of Carlisle (forbidding monastic payments abroad, 1307 and 1330) and of Provisors (forbidding nominations to benefices, 1351), and the statute forbidding citations to the court at Rome (1353), were in fact never fully applied. The kings preferred to deal with these matters to the best of their ability by diplomatic means. After the validity of the statutes had been challenged by Pope Boniface IX, however, the English Parliament replied with the famous Statute of Praemunire, asserting that the right of patronage is a lay plea belonging to the king's court and imposing penalties on all who 'sue in the court of another in derogation of the regality of our lord the king.' These are rebellious words.

The temper of the Commons continued to be hostile to the papacy in the next century and became hostile to the clergy as a whole. In 1404, and again in 1410, they petitioned that the property of the Church should be confiscated to the Crown, although the petition was refused. The fifteenth century saw a continuous growth of insularity, due partly to the deep discredit into which the papacy fell during the years of the great schism (1378-1417), when rival popes fulminated against each

other from Rome and Avignon, and, later, to the moral depravity of the papal court at Rome. By the beginning of the sixteenth century Rome had lost what she had unquestionably enjoyed during the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, the moral leadership of Europe. The loss of moral leadership to a teaching Church would have been grave indeed in any age, but it came at a time of great social changes and intellectual ferment and the effect was therefore catastrophic.

The age of Henry VIII was pre-eminently an age of new men with new manners. The new capitalist landlords and the merchant class now risen to great power and prominence were only too anxious to hear that the restraints imposed by the medieval theology on money-lending, on profit margins, and, above all, on the exploitation of men in the interests of money, lacked valid authority. Nor was the main body of the English clergy staunch in its devotion to the Holy See. They had felt bitterly the intrusion of papal nominees into English benefices and the higher clergy had suffered increasingly from the withdrawal of cases from the English Church courts to Rome. Wolsey's appointment as papal legate brought their irritation with the papacy to a dangerous point (from the point of view of Rome) at the same time that Wolsey's foreign policy, involving the courts in a series of wars in support of the papacy against the alternating threats of France and the empire, was arousing the bitter hatred of the merchants and, indeed, of the whole of the rising middle class.

The English clergy can hardly be blamed for Wolsey's foreign policy, but for the position which the papacy allowed him to assume as, in practice, the final arbiter in all matters affecting the Church in England the English clergy must be held chiefly to blame. The Church's law requiring that provincial councils should meet every three years for the correction of ecclesiastical abuses, and especially of episcopal negligence, had been a dead letter for centuries.¹ As for convocation, we have it from Thomas More himself that 'the English clergy came never together to convocation but at the request of the king, and at

¹ See Philip Hughes's *History of the Church*, vol. iii (Sheed & Ward, 1947).

such these assemblies, concerning spiritual things, have done very little.'¹

Finally, we must bear in mind the great and growing influence of that reaction from decadence which turned so many fine minds, as well as the vast army of time-servers, to the assortment of new doctrines proclaimed by Luther, Zwingli, or Calvin on the Continent, some of which had been popularized earlier by John Wycliffe and the Lollards in England. No age is in a better position to appreciate this position than our own which has seen so many revolutionary movements, most of which have fallen quickly, and some of which have begun, under the leadership of evil men, but which have drawn great and sometimes irresistible strength from the genuineness of the reaction among men of character and candour against pre-existing abuses. The Church of England never became wholly either Lutheran or Calvinist, but the Reformation could hardly have taken place as it did but for the moral authority of many of the reformers and the genuine disgust of many at the immorality of the pre-existing order.

Such men as Tyndale, Coverdale, and Latimer had been used as early as 1521 to meet at Cambridge and discuss the doctrines of the different schools of reform. These men were not necessarily, at that date, any more than their less ardent contemporaries were later, contemplating any formal secession from Rome. The Catholic Church at the beginning of the sixteenth century was, in its discipline, neither the Church of Hildebrand and of Innocent III nor yet the Church as the modern world has known it for the last four hundred years since the Council of Trent (1545-63). The conception of a politically united Christendom with the allegiance of all men divided between one supreme spiritual and one supreme secular authority was dead, killed by the rising force of nationalism. Even the most devout men had come to resent bitterly some of the practical applications of that theoretic indivisibility of the Christian Church to which they still gave intellectual consent. It had not yet been realized at Rome, however, that a politically disunited Christendom required, if theological unity was to be preserved, a different discipline from that appropriate when

¹ *Apology*, edition of 1533, folio 241, quoted by Pollard in *Wolsey*.

the unity of Christendom was the one thing taken for granted everywhere. There had always been in the Middle Ages a great variety of opinion among churchmen on all kinds of matters. Those doctrines which were defined were accepted but they were relatively few. The canon law itself only became defined and accessible in a uniform presentation in the late Middle Ages. There was room left for great divergence of views and interpretation. Even in an open dispute, such as that between Becket and Henry II, the papacy was reluctant to intervene and quick to pardon and forget. It could well afford to because, when it intervened, its intervention was decisive. Its reserved power was unchallenged. The so-called ages of faith were in reality ages of constant disputation and it can be easily shown that almost all the cardinal doctrines of the reformers originate in the writings of some clerical author of the thirteenth, fourteenth, or fifteenth century, most of whom had never been called on by the papacy formally to abjure their opinions. Individual clergy and laymen had been used and allowed for centuries before the Reformation to say very much what they thought. It was only when an organized body of heretics such as the Albigenses or the Lollards had challenged the authority of the State with anti-social or revolutionary doctrines that persecution had followed. In any case, the matter was in practice within the discretion of the individual bishops. There were three hundred and sixty-five heresy trials in England in the thirteen years before Luther's challenge, but they were confined to four dioceses.

Further, the medieval Church had always looked to the secular power to suppress heresy and, following St. Paul, had always conceded to the secular power, subject always to the primacy of the spiritual power, a measure of divine authority.

When, therefore, in 1531 both Houses of Convocation accepted the royal supremacy 'as far as the divine law allows,' they were not, consciously, asserting an obviously heretical doctrine, any more than were the university divines when, even earlier, they had pronounced against the validity of the king's marriage to Catherine of Aragon. They could not know that the king was, quite consciously, aiming at the totality of power

and that in Cromwell and Cranmer (to be appointed archbishop in 1532 on the death of the feeble, complaisant, but orthodox Archbishop Warham), he had found two men to place at the head of the State and the Church who had learnt from the famous treatise of Marsilius of Padua, written in the early fourteenth century, that power was by its nature indivisible, since there cannot be two coercive agencies in the same state. Marsilius was the intellectual founder of totalitarianism, Cranmer its first intellectual disciple, and Cromwell its first practical exponent in England.

The Reformation Parliament which sat from 1529 to 1536 was a packed Parliament.¹ The majority of the lower house consisted of Crown officials. The contemporary evidence is conclusive. Even so it was a rather reluctant partner with its master in breaking the bonds which bound England to Rome and in creating a power of government so centralized and so unlimited that from that date the strife of interests for the control of the central machinery of government has made up the sum of our political history. The men of this parliament were moved, no doubt, partly by fear and partly by interest, but mainly they were driven from behind by political manipulators of extreme skill, unlimited ambition, and complete lack of scruple, who played on their fear of disorder and their vested interest in the new mercantile state which rested so largely on the authority and power of the Crown. Under the tutelage of Cranmer and Cromwell, Henry VIII, who had been born heir

¹ It is curious to see how apologists for the Tudor totalitarianism fall, we may be sure insensibly, into the very language of the modern totalitarian. Thus Professor Neale: 'The planned society of the sixteenth century, with its great measures of religious, economic, and social regulation, could not have sprung spontaneously from a haphazard assembly. . . . Preparations and organization were needed; and no statesman . . . could have failed to perceive that he must have a core of leaders in the House of Commons.' (*Queen Elizabeth*, p. 282).

And, again, a little later on: 'In due course the electoral system, in its own peculiar way, came automatically to assure the government of its nucleus of "king's friends," but until that happened some thought had to be given to securing the same result deliberately.' This is the very language of Goebbels.

Lastly, we have this masterpiece of understatement: 'That Henry VIII took a personal interest in the elections of 1529 seems quite clear.'

to the kingdom of England, and had been given by the pope the proud title of Defender of the Faith, became the defender of a new faith which inspired in the people of England a new fear and only in the breasts of the propertied classes a new ambition and a new hope.

The formal schism of the bishops and abbots took place on 15th May 1532, when convocation promised to enact no new canons without royal licence, and to hand over its legislative functions to a committee, half clerical, half lay, and all nominated by the king. The public temper was hot against the clergy, particularly for their financial exactions. The king exploited it with supreme skill. The fear that, if they vacated their sees and abbacies, the whole fabric and doctrine of the Church would be destroyed by heretical royal appointees, led to the surrender. The following day Thomas More, who saw further, resigned the chancellorship, and the passing, two years later, of the Act of Supremacy led to his execution and to that of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, and of several monks and abbots. The technical ground for execution was not their religious faith, but their refusal to accept an Act of Parliament.

The Parliament as a whole, like the country, did not desire to quarrel with the Crown; and it desired to do so still less when, after the execution of Thomas More, Thomas Cromwell, the money-lender (a vile figure), succeeded to the headship of the executive. He knew his men and their secrets. His silence bred their consent. Erasmus tells us that under Cromwell's rule men feared to speak or write what they thought. They gave him power, and he gave them in return a share in the plunder of the monasteries. In return again they legalized the act of plunder. The climax of parliamentary servility came with the Statute of Treason, which made all criticism of the king punishable by death, a statute under which men were forced to reveal their secret thoughts lest their silence should be held as treasonable. As ever, there was for the people one refuge. *Una salus victis, nullam sperare salutem.* The north rebelled. In the Pilgrimage of Grace the laity of Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Lincolnshire under Sir Robert Aske fought the last fight for the old faith, which was being submerged under the stream of bribes which poured from the monastic coffers.

The rising was the rising of a Catholic peasantry led by a Catholic gentry.

The movement was no desperate throw by a minority of religious fanatics. It was, indeed, the only overt challenge offered to the new despotism, but it was a challenge broadly based, supported by the overwhelming majority of all classes in the north and concerned with many things besides the religious grievances. Victory for the king, Aske told his supporters at York, means 'both us and you and your heirs and ours in bondage for ever.' The pilgrims were concerned with enclosures, with the protection of tenant rights, with the defence of the common law, and with civil and political rights generally. They were representatives of the unindustrialized north, as much opposed to the new monarchy as to the new religion. They demanded representative parliaments and reforms of parliamentary procedure as well as the punishment of the offending ministers and heretical bishops and the reassertion of the papal supremacy in all matters touching the cure of souls. They had behind them a force of over thirty thousand men, and the king, as many of them guessed, was at their mercy. But the astute Duke of Norfolk, sent to disperse the rebels, was wise enough to see that force was no remedy. He offered to negotiate if the rebels disarmed their forces. Robert Aske, for his part, was so foolish as not to realize that force was the only remedy. He had forgotten, for in that age of violence he could hardly plead ignorance, that those who are afraid to take life have no right to meddle with the government of men. He had to plead long with his own side but he won their consent. Norfolk was of the old nobility: he could be trusted; the king was the Lord's anointed: he must be trusted. It was the creed of a simpleton. The tragedy lay in the fact that the simpleton was so much in the right that when his cause was overthrown by a long series of treacheries, and he himself had paid the penalty which is always exacted from men of honour by knaves, his prophecy was exactly fulfilled and his supporters and their heirs had no means of escape left from the tyranny of an all-powerful state. Henry VIII was determined that they should not escape. An example must be made. It was. Henry's instructions to Norfolk have an authentic twentieth-century ring.

'Our pleasure is that before you close up our banner again you shall in any wise cause such dreadful execution to be done upon a good number of the inhabitants of every town, village, and hamlet that have offended in this rebellion, as well by the hanging of them up in trees as by the quartering of them, and the setting of their heads and quarters in every town, great and small, and all such other places, as they may be a fearful spectacle . . . which we require you to do without pity or respect . . . cause all the monks and canons that be in any way faulty to be tied up, without further delay or ceremony, to the terrible example of others. Wherein we think you shall do unto us high service.'

The Pilgrimage of Grace had been a prolonged, honourable, and widespread rebellion, lasting for three years, and the king had won his victory not by force but by treachery. But in the south there was no rebellion. The very wealthy monasteries in the south were not popular. The much greater number of smaller monasteries were in the north and east, and provided all that there was, at that distance from the capital, of social services and poor relief. The scenes accompanying the liquidation, after the Pilgrimage of Grace, of the remaining monasteries continued to shock the northern and eastern counties for a long period. The transfer of capital wealth and annual revenue from these districts to absentee landlords was on a vast scale, and the discontent and disorder aroused ruthless measures and provoked the inevitable reaction. Thomas Cromwell was executed in 1540, and a return to more orthodox dogma became the order of the day. But the degree of 'orthodoxy' must not be exaggerated. A determined minority of the bishops was by now in favour of reforms which would be far-reaching. In 1542 Cranmer forced convocation to amend the service books and thus the first Church of England rites came into existence. This, the original liturgical book of the Anglican rite, was a breviary in Latin. All that was new was the deletion of any reference to the pope. Nevertheless, a book which could be altered a little could be altered a lot. The reformers had their chance with the accession of Edward VI. As for the monasteries, the effects of their destruction remained and were wholly bad. This is not to say that the monasteries

themselves were wholly good. The question of the sex life of the monks and nuns on which so much ink has been spilt is in truth grossly irrelevant. No doubt there were some abuses: equally without doubt they were and have been since grossly exaggerated. On the other hand, a far graver indictment lies against the monasteries which many critics have wholly ignored and that is that the monastic endowments were held in trust for Catholic purposes and that by the time of the dissolution most of the life tenants of the endowments had accepted the royal supremacy. The Pilgrimage of Grace was almost wholly a lay movement by laymen who had held the faith which the monks had abandoned.

The evil and enduring consequences of the dissolution of the monasteries arose from the shock to the public conscience caused by the confiscation of vast religious endowments and property held in trust for sacred ends by a lay state for purposes wholly unspiritual and mainly for the personal enrichment of the friends of the administration. If this could be justified, and men who wished to serve the state and prosper under it had to justify it to themselves at least, anything else could be justified. Politics were thus finally and for ever divorced from morality, secularism became the creed of the men of property, and self-interest the determining principle in the exercise of political power. The dignity and beauty of the great abbeys permeating the whole of the nation's life, the presence of communities of men and women dedicated to the service of God, the fact that at least a fifteenth of the whole wealth of the nation was set aside from generation to generation for purposes other than private gain—these things had served as so many visible and daily reminders that the good life is lived for a purpose stretching beyond the grave. With the forceful obliteration of these reminders the belief weakened and ultimately perished, as some at least of those responsible must have wished. Most of them, no doubt, saw in the total destruction of the monasteries only an easy substitute for the complex measures of reform which were certainly called for.

With the accession of Edward VI and the rise to power of Lord Hertford (who is known to history as the Protector Somerset), the doctrinal reformation was at once renewed. But

Protestantism, though gaining ground, was still unpopular outside London in 1547, and so were some of the new landlords who had succeeded to the monastic lands. Cranmer produced the famous first Prayer Book of Edward VI in English, and the book was detested as an innovation. There were risings in Devon and Cornwall and the Protector Somerset fell from power, driven out by the profiteers, who feared for their property, and by the reforming bishops, who feared for their sees. The next government was vile: a group of profiteers headed by John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, who married his son to Lady Jane Grey, whom Edward VI had recognized as his heir. The English people, however, had other views. Edward died in 1553, and Queen Mary succeeded. Her reign is an interlude, remembered for her marriage to Philip II of Spain, her temporary restoration of the old religion, and her persecution of the Protestants. The only interest of the reign to the secular historian is as an illustration of the quickening tempo of politics and the hardening of the lines of demarcation. The State had learnt the technique of swift and decisive action and men expected no quarter from it. Reformer and counter-reformer had done their work and done it according to their conscience well. The clergy, Catholics and Protestants, now knew where they stood. None of Henry VIII's bishops made their peace with the pope when the old religion came back. Only one of Mary's bishops accepted the Elizabethan version of Protestantism. That Mary's persecution, and particularly the burning of Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley, left England more Protestant than before is often said but it is not for that reason true. It was the new centralized state, not the Protestant religion, which was compelling in its effects. It was the new scepticism as much as the new faith which made England Protestant. Elizabeth was the arch-sceptic. She had conformed during her sister's reign, but for her own security as queen she could not support the Church which declared her illegitimate and therefore without title to her throne. She was compelled to support and be supported by Protestants, and there were many able and sincere men ready waiting to fill the vacant sees. But the Parliament men, who had voted the pope back once they were assured that they could keep the monastic lands and on

Elizabeth's accession voted the pope out on the same understanding, were the main force behind the Elizabethan settlement. These were the representative Englishmen of the sixteenth century and they and the small rich class whom they represented were enjoying the spoils of 644 monasteries, 90 colleges, 2,374 chantries, and 110 hospitals. One-fifteenth of the lands of England and much more of her wealth had passed into their hands. Revenues devoted to the cause of education and to the relief of suffering, distress, and the care of the aged to the value of, at the lowest estimate, nearly £3,000,000 a year in our money, had been sold at ridiculously low prices to the members of the new political oligarchy. Mere loot, to the value of probably £30,000,000 of our money, had been seized by the king's agents and given to the king's favourites. Monks and nuns had been turned adrift, chantry priests had been deprived of their occupation and livelihood, poverty went unrelieved, and the exactions of the new rich and the ruthless enclosures enforced on the former monastic lands aggravated agrarian discontent.

But it was a mercantile age which was dawning, an age of traffic and discovery, an age when the town would dominate the country and commerce triumph over agriculture; and the great distribution of wealth long sterilized or applied to economically unproductive purposes was to fructify in the pockets not of the people but of the new middle class and the still newer nobility. Above all a field was opened on which the genius for power, for it was no less, of the new ruling class could be and was displayed to the full.

A melancholy and dishonourable chapter in our history closed with the death of Edward VI. With the accession of Elizabeth a new chapter begins. We are a volatile people and we must not imagine that the country, deeply disturbed and uneasy as it was, long remained so. Under the wise, firm, and even—on the whole—just government of Elizabeth and her great ministers England achieved wealth and security and became correspondingly at ease in her conscience.

CHAPTER SIX

THE BIRTH OF MODERN ENGLAND

ELIZABETH owed her peaceful succession to the throne to the goodwill, dictated by policy, of Philip II of Spain. It is one of history's ironies that this sombre fanatic of the Catholic cause, as he appears to those of us who read our history backwards and think only of the persecutions in the Netherlands, the plots centred round Mary Queen of Scots, and the climax of the attempted conquest of England, should have been the conscious architect of Elizabeth's triumphant Protestant settlement. That, however, is the way it was.

On the death of Mary the legitimate heir to the English throne, alike by canon and statute law, was Mary Queen of Scots, for Elizabeth was illegitimate not only by Catholic but by English law. Mary of Scotland was, however, the daughter-in-law of the king of France, and her accession would have meant a French ascendancy over England, a great accession of power to the French monarchy, and in all probability the end of Spanish rule in the Netherlands. This situation lasted for nine years until 1567, when the Scottish Protestants, not without assistance from England, defeated Mary, who fled across the border and became the prisoner of Elizabeth. From that hour war between England and Spain became certain, not because either party wanted it, but because it became necessary to both of them. War no longer, for Philip, meant the risk that the defeat of Elizabeth would place his enemy's ally on the throne of England, while Elizabeth, so far from risking her throne by breaking with Spain, could only in the long run retain the goodwill of the Protestants in Scotland, on whose ascendancy depended not only her own security but the Protestant succession, by championing the cause of Protestantism on the Continent, and notably in the Netherlands. Philip, for his part, came to see that he could not subdue and retain the

Netherlands without command of his sea communications. This meant at least the decisive defeat and possibly the actual conquest of England.

Only after 1588, with Mary Queen of Scots dead and Spain defeated, was Elizabeth secure, but it is doubtful if she was ever as insecure as she believed herself to be. The power of Spain was great but was itself insecurely based, firstly on a great import of precious metals from the new world, which swelled her treasury but destroyed her internal economy, and, secondly, on sea power, which was subject to challenge from English privateers. The challenge was necessarily on disadvantageous terms. Sea power was a luxury for Elizabeth's England, a necessity for Spain, who had to convoy her treasure from the Americas and her troops to and from the Netherlands. The English, on the other hand, could strike when and where they liked. Only by threatening invasion and so bringing the whole sea power of England to battle could Spain hope to preserve her empire. Those historians who regard the dispatch of the Armada as a reckless and vainglorious action on the part of Spain, ignore the essential strategic problem. Spain should, in fact, have struck much earlier, before she was exhausted by repeated losses at sea at the hands of the privateers and by the revolt of the Netherlands indefinitely prolonged by English aid in men and money.

With the possible exception of Henry II, Elizabeth was, after the Conqueror, the ablest sovereign who has ever ruled in England, but she was also, and unquestionably, the most fortunate, because her genius was essentially political and she reigned at a time when power in Europe was so nicely balanced that political skill and personal charm were almost sufficient for greatness. It was a century since England had finally lost her continental possessions. Since then she had sustained a political, a religious, and an economic revolution. The combined result had been the growth of a strong autocratic monarchy and a powerful middle class based on trade, greatly strengthened by the spoils of the monasteries, and rapidly developing into a new, vigorous, and acquisitive aristocracy, no longer feudally dependent on the Crown but economically self-supporting and politically ambitious. Supporting throne and

aristocracy alike was the new mercantile class in the rapidly growing towns and the great vested interests concerned with seaborne trade. In the north and among the landed gentry in the west the old faith lingered but not with the fierce anger of the counter-reformers on the Continent, whose emissaries were to come later in the reign to disturb England's peace. Such religious enthusiasm as there was in the south of England was provided by the returned Protestant exiles and by the growing force of Puritanism in the towns.

Associated with the Catholic cause were the unpopular monarchies of France and Spain, each with rebellious Protestant subjects with whom English sympathies necessarily lay for military and political, quite as much as religious, reasons. At Mary's death six sees had been vacant and four more bishops died in the year of Elizabeth's accession. No revolution was needed in the circumstances to bring back Protestantism. It was necessary in form to repeal the Marian legislation and to restore the royal supremacy and the Prayer Book of 1552. Parliament agreed to both, although, in the House of Lords, all the spiritual peers at first voted against the Prayer Book and the Uniformity Bill only passed in the end by a majority of three. This might suggest that the old religion had many supporters, but in the Commons there was a large majority for 'reform.'

It was an age of new men who faced a new world, and they found it good. France and Spain, the traditional enemies of England, were weak and Scotland, for so long a threat to every English sovereign, was on the way to becoming a friendly power, with the Catholic queen losing ground every day. Spain was at hand to ensure that the only possible threat to English security, an active and offensive alliance between Mary Queen of Scots and France, would never come into being. France, Spain, and the empire might waste their strength in wars of religion, but in England men could see only the dawning of the Atlantic age. Their minds and hearts were bent on adventure, and the new religion, denying the leadership alike of Rome and Geneva, was essentially insular. The cultural as well as the political links with the old days and the old continental system were broken. No longer had English statesmen, faced with a wealthy and autonomous Church, to heed the trends of papal

diplomacy or fear the wrath to come; for the Elizabethans even the day of judgment had lost its terrors.

The Elizabethan story is pre-eminently a story of a country reborn to youth and living on to something perilously near disillusion. Tremendous problems, diplomatic, constitutional, and economic, were growing up by the end of the century and as Elizabeth grew old people were becoming impatient. For the first thirty years of the reign, however, public life was a splendid adventure in which all classes took a hand, sheltered by an almost accidental security which Elizabeth was content to leave undisturbed. Nothing must be pressed to the point of war. All her potential enemies must be kept occupied beyond her frontiers by every diplomatic subtlety, by subsidies, by promises, even by a little unofficial military assistance. Meanwhile the new aristocracy consolidated its hold, built its houses and organized its estates, while commerce expanded and, above all, our sea adventure began.

It was, in the secular field, an age of splendid achievement and of hopes still more splendid which have to-day become fireside memories, kindling the heart but no longer stirring the blood. We shall never again, with the audacity of youth, sail the seven seas determined to conquer. We shall never thunder against the challenge of dogma fortified by tradition and armed with authority. To-day we prefer in politics the methods of compromise: we have no mission. We live in an age of diminishing expectations; the frontiers are nearer, the horizons are closing in. We are governed to-day not by the laws of growth but by the requirements of defence. Our politics are a balancing of interests, not a battle of wits: our progress the attempted adjustment of means to ends, not a pageant of adventure. Our literature is coming near to criticism, our art to abstraction, our drama to chronicle, our architecture to mere accommodation. But we can recapture, perhaps, some inspiration and some lessons from the older story.

Like her father and grandfather, Elizabeth ruled through her council whom she appointed and who were responsible solely to her. Neither the new nor the old nobility were her mentors, but the Cecils, father and son, Walsingham, Bacon, and the keen and zealous staff of professional secretaries whom Cecil

gathered round him. She called in her long reign of nearly sixty years only ten Parliaments, which sat for thirteen sessions. Their time was not yet. The Elizabethan Parliaments still had no right of initiative and their election was still largely controlled by the Crown, when it was not controlled by the sheriff, who was the Crown's nominee. Elizabethan elections in the counties were not often disputed, but when they were the contestants were competing only for the local influence and patronage which the position of a knight of the shire appears to have conferred. Even then the decision seems as often as not to have been reached by chicanery. There was no trace of popular election, but there is clear evidence that towards the end of the reign the new aristocracy of country gentlemen and merchant princes were growing restive at the irresponsibility of the court and at the unending war with Spain. The splendour and luxury of the court was an outward and visible sign of the rewards of centralized power. The struggle for the monopoly of this power and for its exercise in directions according more consistently with the interests of property, could not in all probability have been long postponed even if Elizabeth had lived. By 1600 the country was tired of adventure. The new families were by then in the second or third generation. They had paid for their footing by two generations of acquiescence in absolute government and they were ready to claim their reward. The reaction was inspired partly by war weariness, partly by a conscious desire for a constitutional revolution.

National pride has taught us that England defeated Spain when she defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588. That is a schoolboy fantasy. Throughout the long reign of Philip II, which lasted till 1598, Spain rose steadily in wealth and power, and it was of the Spanish Empire then established that the familiar boast was invented, that it was an empire on which the sun never set. The war between England and Spain lasted until 1604, and left Spain incomparably the greater power.

In the intervals of fighting English privateers and Dutch rebels and invading Ireland, Spain saved Europe from the Turks, conquered Algiers, the Malabar coast and the East Indies, added South and Central America, and restored Central Europe to the Catholic world. Meanwhile Velasquez and El

Greco in painting, Lope de Vega, Cervantes, and Calderon in literature, carried Spanish culture to its highest expression.

We cannot measure the brilliance or the limitations of England's achievement unless we understand the greatness of her enemies. Spain was the fire in which the English steel was tempered. Our struggle with her, lasting almost half a century, has left decisive marks on our character, our institutions, and our place in the councils of Europe.

The long war of the privateers was the beginning alike of the English supremacy in seamanship and of the national tradition in strategy. It was a war of brilliant individual adventurers, hampered by persistent governmental inaction. God made England an island, Queen Elizabeth made the English insular. England under Elizabeth was the *enfant terrible* of Europe, a role to grow later into that of *perfidie Albion*. We plundered and blundered, we raided and traded in slaves, we sailed round the world. We opened up trade with Russia and sent unsuccessful colonists to Newfoundland. But, at the end of the sixteenth century, Spain had consolidated her possessions in the new world into a powerful empire which lasted down into the nineteenth century, and the Dutch had most of the world's carrying trade. We had emerged on the stage of history in the role now habitually ours, that of the one incalculable factor whose intervention is always unexpected and may be decisive for any nation except our own.

There was no logic in this warfare of slavers and pirates carried on in the name of liberty and the reformed religion. But there was also no meanness and no littleness of spirit. Simultaneously there comes into English literature, born of these ardent and illogical adventures, the language of patriotism and the language of disillusion:

Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter,
Warwick and Talbot, Shrewsbury and Gloucester,
ever in flowing cups freshly remembered . . .

but yet:

a tale
told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
signifying nothing.

The wealth, the luxury, the audacity of invention and exploit grew with the growing century. Most of the literature we know as Elizabethan belongs to these closing years, when the crafty Cecil was dead and the grim Walsingham, first of the Puritans, Elizabeth herself, and Drake, the 'thief of the new world,' were growing old. But Shakespeare, Philip Sidney, Bacon, Marlowe, Spenser, and Ben Jonson were younger and in the full power of their achievement, save only Sidney, who died at Zutphen untimely, having achieved nothing but immortality.

One result of the Tudor wars against Spain was less happy, and, unfortunately, no less lasting. The men who fought Spain fought, in the process, Catholicism. They also made substantial private fortunes. Their political supporters at home were men whose fathers had similarly reaped large personal advantages in the battle against the Roman order and discipline. The sons saw in the Spanish treasure ships, as their fathers had seen in the English monasteries, a field where, as Mr. Trevelyan so gracefully puts it, 'private fortunes could be made, public service rendered to their royal mistress, and the true religion upheld.' It was a singularly fortunate conjunction for adventurous and aspiring men, who could and did thrive on a scale unparalleled in any previous epoch, and hardly even equalled in nineteenth-century America. The historical result has been to leave our race with a rather easy morality in the matter of other people's property, and the ability to combine the acquisition of a private fortune with a sense of moral exaltation which men of other races find surprising. The political effect of Elizabethan licence in these matters was noteworthy. Adventure and authority are uneasy bedfellows, and a generation which saw the laws of men and nations defied with impunity and not without reward claimed the right to shape their own humdrum lives in their own fashion; to lift up their voices in Parliament and in the conventicles; to praise God, as well as to blaspheme Him, in their own English way. Hooker the judicious sounded for the first time the notes of the authentic Canterbury bell which exorcises nothing but enthusiasm, and his plea for moderation in temper and doctrine has commanded for centuries the assent of a majority of his countrymen. But the history of the world is the history of minorities.

The Puritan movement gathered strength in England in the closing years of Elizabeth's reign, and in Scotland it came to power. James VI, the cautious and crafty son of Mary Queen of Scots, had his eye fixed at least as firmly on the English succession as on the golden gates when he embraced the reformed religion. The doctrines of Geneva appealed to Scottish logic and the property of the Church appealed to the Scottish nobility. The English reformation compromise was wholly alien to Scottish sentiment, which was democratic, and to Scottish logic, which has always had a Gallic flavour. John Knox's reformation and its consequences were in harmony with the Scottish temper: it was otherwise with the English reformation. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the greatest of the Elizabethan legacies—the English tradition in poetry. Through the whole field of English poetry runs the deep fissure of those divided loyalties which were fixed in our race for ever by this Elizabethan age. For we have remained ever since what that age left us, at once Catholic in taste and Protestant in temper; insular by an imagined necessity and European by a generous instinct; lovers of life and on familiar terms with death; stoical in defeat and uneasy in victory; proud and self-critical; materialistic and quixotic.

Music, not poetry, is the art of democracies: the enjoyment of poetry is the privilege always of the few. But in England this has been more so than elsewhere, because only those who by the accident of birth, fortune, or genius are above the battle can afford divided loyalties. In compensation the same Reformation movement bequeathed to us the splendours of the English Liturgy and the Authorized Version of the English Bible. Divided in their interpretation of the new revelation, the English people preferred to see themselves as the chosen people of the old dispensation, and in so seeing themselves fell for many generations under the discipline of the most magnificent prose in any language. From that discipline sprang the once instinctive spirit of the crusader which animated our countrymen, a spirit at once generous and intolerant, gentle in attack but unshakable in defence, unconsciously aggressive but consciously just, gaining the respect of our enemies and arousing the alarm of our friends.

The resulting alliance of the crusading spirit and the marauding genius under the leadership of a sceptical, imaginative, and cosmopolitan aristocracy presented a curious spectacle to the world for nearly four centuries. It was an alliance rooted in the facts of our history, and chiefly in the discord set up in the Elizabethan age between our national temper and our political necessities as they appeared to our rulers in those days.

We might have become, like the Dutch, a commercial oligarchy; we bred instead a new aristocracy which fused and in time became indistinguishable from the descendants of the old families. This fact was due largely to the close association first of the Spanish and later of the French aristocracy with the Tudor courts. The vulgarity of provincialism, in fact, never infected the English court or English society until the Napoleonic era.

On the other hand, Tudor domestic architecture was the creation of the distinctive English genius for tolerance and adaptability. Applied to the fundamental questions of morals and politics, this genius comes near to John Morley's definition of politics as 'the science of the second best,' and Morley himself was to live on into an age of catastrophe which must have caused him to doubt profoundly whether the second best is good enough. But, in matters of social organization and amenity, tolerance and adaptability lie at the root of the matter. And so we must look behind the troubled Elizabethan façade, behind the *fumum et opes strepitumque Romae*, to the countryside, learning to wear its new secular habit in the closing decades. The feudal magnates, the knights, the freemen, the priests, and the monasteries had all gone, but the squire, the parson, the country house, and the yeoman families were coming to the front of the stage, and, in the country towns, the new industries, still happily localized, were absorbing much of the landless labour. The new men who became heirs to the English countryside might have forced on the countryside a change as drastic as that which they imposed upon our religion and our politics. They did nothing of the kind. The pleasant dignity of Tudor domestic architecture, Swakeleys and Compton Wynyates, and even the more pretentious Hatfield and Audley End, contrast wholly

favourably, in their close and intimate relationship to the life around them, with the swollen dimensions and urbanized style of piles like Houghton and Wentworth Woodhouse. Nor do the appearances mislead. For another two centuries the English countryside was to retain some substantial part of the old freedom and more than the old prosperity. To this day there remain solid foundations on which a free England might be built. For this we have to thank our medieval inheritance, but also those men of the new dispensation who did their best to preserve the traditions of earlier centuries and to adapt them to the more complex purposes of their own troubled times.

The passing of Elizabeth marks the end of an epoch. The government had for long been in the hands first of William Cecil and then of his son Robert, and of the secretaries of the council, on whom was beginning to fall, as on the Civil Service to-day, the real burden of executive government. For some time before her death Elizabeth had been ill, and those around the court, and notably the chiefs of the administration, were in touch with the King of Scotland, the first Protestant inheritor of the English throne.¹ When Elizabeth died there was no change, as we should say, of government. That did not take place till the death of the second Cecil, Robert, Earl of Salisbury, in 1612. But there was an immediate change of policy.

The English had developed a national consciousness, even the consciousness of a mission, but they had been, as Miss C. V. Wedgwood reminds us, 'over secure in their good fortune.' There was no money, for some years there had been no money, to pay for the war. 'Soldiers went in rags and sailors starved in the hulks of rotting ships, the streets swarmed with discharged veterans and out-of-work journeymen, while on the highways sturdy vagabonds defied the savage Poor Law and the gallows itself, begging by day and stealing by night. The medieval revenues of the Crown could not bear the strain of a national war and new taxes galled the people. Confident of victory the English demanded a peace that their queen and her ministers could not enforce on the Spanish enemy. Spain was tired and bruised, her people discontented, her government enfeebled by a monkish king and an unscrupulous favourite, but she had

¹ Elizabeth was a practising Catholic at the time of her accession.

8,000,000 subjects and the greatest industrial towns of Europe, she had the blessing of the pope, the backing of the emperor, and the rich West Indian mines. England had 2,000,000 people and only one town to compare with those of Spain; she had few industries and no mines, her funds were exhausted, her trade suffering, and her youthful strength overtried.¹

The first task of James I's government was to make peace, and the second to keep it. The first was soon accomplished, with much face-saving on both sides, for Spain would not recognize the independence of the Netherlands nor England the exclusive trading rights of Spain in the new world. But in practice peace was restored in Europe, English trade revived, and prosperity returned. The government was free, it might have seemed, to work out the complications of the new Poor Law, to reorganize the national finances, and to foster that industrial development which in Tudor theory was the high function of the State. Much was in fact accomplished in this direction in the first forty years of the new century, but it was accomplished, unlike so many progressive reforms of our own day, not somewhat grudgingly and in response to popular insistence but in the teeth of parliamentary opposition, which ultimately brought the process of reform to a standstill. The attitude of the State towards unemployment is characteristic of the tendencies at work. At the beginning of the century it was the normal thing for the State to attempt not merely to relieve but to stop unemployment both by legislative and administrative action. In 1622 a Royal Commission was set up to investigate the causes of unemployment and remedies were applied with the sanction of the prerogative courts behind them. Again, the purpose of the much hated monopolies, created by royal patent, was to foster new industries and stop the importations of goods which could be manufactured to give employment at home. After the Civil War, however, the State never again until the present century accepted the responsibility for curing unemployment or directly promoting employment.

The reasons were certainly mixed, but as a matter of history a prime cause of that attempted revolution in the middle of the seventeenth century which we call the Great Rebellion was

¹ C. V. Wedgwood, *Strafford, 1593-1641* (Cape, 1935), page 18.

the growing hostility of the middle classes to the state regulation of commerce and industry. The successors of the privateers and the merchant adventurers had no use for such a medieval conception as the just price, nor did they think it right that economic activity should conform to an ethical standard. They were coming to believe, on the other hand, as Sir Dudley North was to say a few years later, that 'wherever the traders thrive, the public of which they are a part thrive also.' It was a burning question in the first half of the seventeenth century whether the Crown, which was still the executive of the State, could successfully assert its claim to regulate commerce and industry or whether the State must give ground before the rising tide of individualism.

What the answer might have been if Elizabeth had been succeeded on the throne by another sovereign as popular and prudent is perhaps doubtful. When she was succeeded by a foreigner who surrounded himself with unpopular favourites, and when the precociously arrogant class, which claimed absolute freedom to conduct its private business without interference from the Crown and the prerogative courts, claimed at the same time the right to preach and teach every variety of Puritan doctrine and to be directly inspired when so doing, the challenge to the Crown became more formidable than ever before in our history. It followed inexorably that the Crown, attempting to discharge its traditional responsibilities in regard to economies and its newer responsibilities in regard to public worship and Church discipline, in each case against stronger and conscientious opposition, was forced to stretch its prerogative to the utmost. Thus was added to the religious and economic dispute a serious constitutional quarrel.

The combination of forces against the Crown seemed and proved to be irresistible, but its effect was purely destructive. The coalition of Parliamentarians, merchant financiers, common lawyers, and fanatical sectaries and 'levellers' was united only in its opposition to the throne, and then only to the extent that the throne had insisted on maintaining undiminished its vast prerogative powers. These powers had been handed down from Anglo-Saxon times and had never been previously challenged if only because they had never previously been fully

employed except with the support either of the baronage or the Church.

Even so the issues might have been successfully compromised in 1625 when Charles I came to the throne but for the fact that Parliament had jockeyed James I into a war against Spain in defence of Protestant interests on the Continent without granting the necessary supplies. Protestant enthusiasm in England and papal diplomacy in Spain had wrecked James I's astute policy of using Spanish friendship (which he had hoped to cement into an alliance by marrying Charles to a Spanish princess) to bring effective pressure on the empire in the interests of the Protestants of Bohemia. This gave Parliament, the City of London, and the common lawyers their opportunity. They could and did place the Crown in the impossible position of refusing the supply offered for the prosecution of a popular war against the hated Catholic monarchy of Spain on grounds which to all the politically minded middle classes seemed selfish and pedantic. Let the king but declare himself the servant, not the ruler, of his people and the war in defence of the Godly Protestants of Bohemia could proceed.

It was not to be so.

THE AGE OF OLIGARCHY

CHARLES I inherited as his chief minister George Villiers, his father's favourite and by him created Duke of Buckingham. He was as competent a minister as Elizabeth's favourites, Leicester and Essex. Elizabeth, however, had contented herself with appointing her favourites to command military expeditions abroad, which she had small intention of supporting with men or money; at home she had relied on the Cecils and their friends. So long as Robert Cecil lived, James I had followed this wise course, but, when Cecil died in 1612, first Robert Carr, created Earl of Essex, and then Villiers, exercised almost a monopoly of power. When Charles I found his prerogative power attacked, it was attacked first of all through Buckingham who was not only his minister but his friend.

In claiming the right to impeach (i.e. in practice to dismiss) the king's chief minister, Parliament claimed a right which it had last tried to exercise in 1459 when the king had vetoed the proceedings. Other parliamentary claims, such as that billeting, impositions, monopolies, or the levy of ship money were unconstitutional, were bad law, but they were arguable. The claim to choose the Crown's ministers was, in 1626, a constitutional outrage. It was, however, a step along a path already chosen before Charles came to the throne. The Parliament men, who represented and claimed to represent no one but the owners of substantial property, had determined, once Cecil was dead, to attempt the transfer of the sovereignty of the realm from the Crown to themselves, and their policy was, therefore, to challenge and limit the royal prerogative on every excuse that offered. The incompetence of Buckingham was an excuse ready to hand. So, in the next Parliament, was the unpopularity of forced loans, of the billeting of soldiers, and of punishment under martial law, into all of which Charles had been

led by having to fight a war without supply. Parliament's protest against these actions took the form of the celebrated Petition of Right. What the Commons had in mind in forcing this petition on Charles is clear from their rejection of the Lords' amendment to the petition. The Lords wished to state to the king that they presented it 'with due regard to leave entire that sovereign power wherewith your Majesty is trusted with the protection, safety, and happiness of your people.' The Commons refused to say that. They did not wish to preserve but to diminish that sovereign power. Shortly, they were to ask for its abolition, but at present they were content merely to ask that certain Acts be transferred out of the sphere of the prerogative into the sphere of law, 'out of the sphere of that law which the king is above into the sphere of that law which is above the king.'¹

The king signified his assent to the petition, but the nature of the revolution which was being attempted became clear in the next session when Parliament found yet another excuse in the unpopularity of Bishop Laud and again refused regular supplies until, this time, they had been assured of a religious policy which was to their liking. Meanwhile the war on which the country had so recklessly embarked was going on disastrously. We had been led into war with France as well as Spain, through the need to try and assist the French Protestants, but all the operations, naval and military, had been ill found and therefore unsuccessful.

The consequences of the ill-considered enthusiasm of Parliament in the Protestant interest were to be fatal to the Protestant cause in Europe and the consequences of their ill-timed appetite for political sovereignty were to be fatal to the common people of England. If Spain had been detached from the empire, which was the purpose of James's Spanish policy, Gustavus Adolphus must have triumphed, Bohemia would have been restored to Protestant rule, and the English monarchy, achieving its political and religious ends by diplomatic means, would have been strong enough to achieve a constitutional compromise which would not have left the propertied classes in supreme control of the machinery of the state, able to deny to

¹ G. B. Adams, *op. cit.*, page 296.

the poorer classes all effective representation in Parliament until the nineteenth century. But it was not to be. England had not yet learnt the lesson that effective intervention in Europe is impossible for her without a continental ally and that the important thing about an ally is not that he be pleasant but that he be strong. With that incapacity for facing the realities of the military situation in Europe which seems to be endemic in English politicians, men of all shades of opinion—the vast majority of them opposed alike to Catholicism, to social upheaval, and to aristocratic privilege—insisted on the Spanish war, established for three centuries the supremacy of Catholic Austria in Central Europe, precipitated a civil war in their own country, and established an aristocratic oligarchy as its result.

It was at the very moment when the popular temper demanded vigorous prosecution of the war that James I had died. The supply for the war had been formally promised to him. It was withheld from his successor not as a protest against grievances, but as a first step in a constitutional dispute deliberately begun. So much for Parliament's good faith. For his part Charles resolved to go ahead with the war on inadequate provision, and the consequences were as fatal to the Protestants in Bohemia as our military and diplomatic activities from 1939 to 1945 were to the once free people of Poland. By 1629 the men of property were determined not on a more balanced constitution, but on their own sovereignty. They imagined that they held all the cards and that Charles must surrender. That was Parliament's defence for actions not constitutionally defensible. Charles felt his duty clear, and for eleven years, from 1629 to 1640, he ruled England, during years of great progress and prosperity, without a Parliament.¹ Charles reasoned, and that was his defence for actions so impolitic as to be not otherwise defensible, that what began in 1629 was not a struggle between

¹ The only constitutional issue of note during all this period was the refusal of John Hampden to pay his taxes, a refusal which made him a hero and has preserved his fame to this day. The judges who rightly condemned him, for there was no reasonable doubt as to the law then or since, were removed by his Parliamentary colleagues a few years later in the course of their fight for the supremacy of law over politics. If the law is to be supreme it must clearly be interpreted by sound politicians.

Crown and Parliament but a struggle by the Crown against the attempt of the rich men and powerful interests who formed and controlled the House of Commons of that day to acquire *unlimited* power.

It is incorrect to say that in the course of this struggle the Crown was itself forced to attempt absolute rule, because the Crown remained circumscribed by the written and unwritten laws and customs of the constitution, to which it remained obedient. The sovereignty of Parliament, on the other hand, meant the assumption of sovereignty by a body which, when it became the master of the executive, while remaining, as it had been ever since the Reformation Parliament, a true legislature, would be subject to no laws. It involved passing from the inelastic security of a written constitution to the flexible insecurity of an unwritten constitution, and in particular from an executive kept within bounds by the financial control imposed on it by custom and law to an executive which was itself the taxing authority, and which therefore knew no bounds to the extension of its power. All these implications, clear enough to Charles Stuart in 1629, are becoming clear to his countrymen only to-day. The verdict on them had yet to be passed.

That the City under Pym and the lawyers deliberately planned the seizure of sovereignty is as certain as anything in English history. It is begging the question either to say that the rich were exploiting their riches or that they were fighting the battle of liberty. All men seek power from mixed motives. The position of the king was throughout clear. He was the head of the executive. The business of government was growing and must be attended to. The building of a fleet, the administration of the new Poor Law, the regulation of trade and wages, the foundation of colonies, the regulation of currency, the protection of the public forests against encroachments, the government of Ireland, and the carrying out of the Elizabethan religious settlement in the face of growing Puritan disorder—these were matters which necessarily engaged the day-by-day attention of the executive at home. Abroad Charles's government, driven out of the French and Spanish war by the refusal of Parliament to grant supplies, had nevertheless to protect British interests in the East, where the Dutch were our rivals,

and in the narrow seas, where the privateers were imperilling our commerce.

All these grave matters of home and foreign policy were the Crown's responsibility under the constitution. With or without the help of Parliament Charles determined to discharge them. For eleven years he succeeded.

Charles's government was of the complexion and character that we now call 'national.' As such it inevitably began with a large measure of popularity with the non-political classes, but with the latent antagonism of politically minded minorities and vested interests. After a time the first enthusiasm for the new government waned, the vested interests grew restive, the fanatical exponents of revolutionary, political, and social doctrines began to feel actively the restriction of their platform. Most of all, however, the growing unpopularity of Charles's personal government was due to administrative incompetence. In the north, where Thomas Wentworth ruled as president of the Council of the North, the government was popular, except with the rich; in the south there was no personality at Whitehall strong enough to keep the courtiers and their friends in order; there was thus no popular support in London or the rich home counties to offset the anger of the lawyers, the zeal of the Puritan fanatics, or the discontents of the rich. The alliance between the landlords, the City, and the sects was an unnatural one, but it was made a formidable political reality by the Scottish revolt in 1638. This was the result of Charles's endeavour to order the discipline and worship of the Scottish Church, as Laud was doing for England from Canterbury. Laud's policy, meanwhile, was antagonizing the moderate Protestants as well as the sects, who were growing in influence with the people just at the time when the right of laymen to preach from the Church pulpits was being restricted much more severely than before. There is a marked parallel between the Puritan sectaries and the leaders of 'advanced' thought to-day, for in opposition to the Laudian policy, which was not only traditional but nationalist, the sectaries were not only revolutionary in doctrine but internationalist in sympathy. Geneva was the Moscow of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; it was the centre from which spread first and

foremost the doctrine of predestination with its correlative suggestion for a dictatorship of the Elect transcending all national boundaries, and threatening the authority of all secular governments.

Meanwhile, as the prerogative courts—the old Court of Star Chamber, the newer Council of the North, and the Court of High Commission, entrusted with Church affairs—extended their work and influence, for the Crown was forced to rely on the prerogative as the sole source of its legislative power, the common lawyers grew correspondingly restive as they added professional pique to political disappointment.

Nevertheless, and in spite of growing discontent beneath the surface, the period of Charles's personal rule in England, and of the rule of Wentworth, his ablest minister, in Ireland, was the most peaceful that either country was to know until the administration of Robert Walpole three generations later. The great historian, Lord Clarendon, who opposed the Crown at the beginning of the Long Parliament, later fought with the king, and afterwards knew the first triumphs of the Restoration, has written the epitaph of these years in memorable words: 'During the whole time . . . this kingdom enjoyed the greatest calm and the fullest measure of felicity that any people and in any age for so long a time together have been blessed with.' From this verdict there is no appeal.

Alas! As all who play the great game learn too late, or forget too soon, there is no gratitude in politics. When Charles was faced with the Scottish rebellion of the covenanters against his Church reforms, and was forced, in order to obtain supplies, to summon Parliament in 1640—for Charles made no effort at any time to raise extraordinary revenues except by constitutional means—the angry minorities in England coalesced against him. Pym repeated his tactics of 1625, 1626, and 1628, and refused supply. What was refused to the constitutional head of a constitutional government was given readily to the rebel Scottish armies, who were kept in the field at the price of a grant from Parliament of £850 a day. Meanwhile Charles I made concession after concession, and ended by signing the death warrant of Thomas Wentworth, who had become his chief minister and whom he had created Earl of Strafford.

For this mistake Charles paid willingly with his life, publicly acknowledging his error. He allowed Strafford to die to save the monarchy, after Strafford had offered the sacrifice. He thought to save the nation from civil war. He made it certain. The English Parliament, thinking the man was down, struck him.

From that morning things moved swiftly, and some of them on a tide which has never receded. Most notably the lawyers established their claim to be the arbiters of justice. By all the traditions of Christianity and the requirements of logic, two obligations rest on the government as trustees for the people: one is the giving of justice and the other the control of money. By the direct action of the Long Parliament, confirmed at the Restoration, the lawyers took justice into their own hands, a monopoly which has endured so long that we to-day accept it without considering its fundamental incongruity. The control of money by the monied interests came later. For the moment it was not the City but the sectaries who, with the lawyers, forced the issue. Bills were proposed to abolish the episcopacy and to hand over the armed forces of the government to Parliament. Thus the Civil War began.

The historic incidents of the conflict, the murder of Archbishop Laud, the collapse of the fiction of a constitutional government, and the final destruction of the very form of Parliament by the army under Cromwell, the murder of the king, pronounced guilty by a minority of his judges—these things happened, as such things always happen when a minority rules. Yet the important historical fact remains. The Great Rebellion failed. It failed because it was not a rebellion but an attempted revolution. Twenty years later the Glorious Revolution was to succeed because it was only a somewhat inglorious rebellion: but because of that later triumph of the propertied classes we take the earlier drama of the Civil War too seriously, reading into it much that was not there. The seventeenth century preserved the Establishment, ordered the services and discipline of the Church, settled the North American continent, and regularized and finally tolerated nonconformity. These were its lasting achievements in the constitutional sphere, and they have remained secure to our own day. They were the achieve-

ments of the Stuart kings against which lawyers, soldiers, merchants, and sectaries protested and fought in vain. On the political side the attempt to preserve the old constitution failed, but so also did the effort for the unlimited sovereignty of Parliament. Contrary to the teaching of the old text-books, modern studies of the eighteenth-century documents, and in particular of the Newcastle correspondence and the correspondence between George III and Bute, make it clear that the right of the Crown to choose the Prime Minister and to share in shaping his policy remained secure for more than a century after the Restoration. What was achieved as a result of the seventeenth-century conflict was the balance which Charles I conceded before the Civil War began.

The further consolidation of the power of the oligarchy in the eighteenth century was really achieved at the expense not of the Crown but of the people, whose representation, already inadequate in 1640, had become by 1832 a farcical sham. From the date of the inglorious rebellion until the Reform Bill there were no new charters granted to boroughs, no extension of the franchise, and no Redistribution Act. The result was a progressively effective denial of the principle of representation. This result cannot be regarded as unintended. James I's was the last reign which saw the enfranchisement of new boroughs even on a modest scale, but the right to decide such matters was successfully claimed by Parliament and was thereafter grudgingly exercised. James I's intention had been to give representation to many towns entitled to it by reason of their new importance, but even if we accept the alternative view, that his object was merely to increase the king's influence over Parliament, as the Tudors had done by the creation of rotten boroughs in the west country, the significant fact remains that Parliament, having taken the right of enfranchisement from the Crown, never afterwards exercised it properly until compelled to do so by popular agitation at the beginning of the last century.

The leaders of the attempted seventeenth-century revolution have in the final reckoning nothing much to their credit, for the balanced constitution had, in fact, been won before the Civil War broke out. The most important achievements of the

seventeenth-century governments were not in the sphere of constitutional reform at all, but in the sphere of colonization and commerce, in the systematic patronage of art, letters, and science, and in the tardy beginnings of religious and political tolerance. In one important respect the text-books must be corrected, for it is now known that the British carrying trade at sea was not created by Cromwell's Navigation Act but was already dominant in European waters by 1640. The Navigation Acts were important but only as protecting by legislation a source of power and wealth already created by the free energies of the British people.

The eighteenth century is reckoned, and rightly, as the golden age of British expansion, which saw the expulsion of the French from the hinterland of the American colonies, the conquest of Canada and the consolidation of our power in India, the acquisition of Cape Colony, Malta, and Gibraltar, and the discovery of Australia. The foundation of all this expansion was laid decades before William III seized the throne. The whole of the colonization of America had taken place under the Stuarts, beginning with Virginia in 1607. Under Charles II emigration had increased until almost the whole of the Atlantic seaboard was acquired. All the colonies of Charles II were granted self-government and religious toleration. Elsewhere it was the same story. Trading stations had been established at Surat (1612), at Madras (1639), at Bombay (1662). The Jamaica Company had set up factories in West Africa. Prince Rupert had founded the Hudson's Bay Company; on the Barbary Coast we held for a few years Tangier, the predecessor of Gibraltar as our control over the gate of the Mediterranean; Bermuda, Barbados, and Jamaica had been occupied. These were the foundations of our empire, and we owe them to the Stuarts and their ministers.

At home, for all the tumult and the shouting, the record of the seventeenth-century statesmen was negative, if we except that of Charles I, who died for the Anglican Establishment, and Charles II, who restored it. Buckingham, Charles I's great minister, was unlucky: that writes his epitaph as a politician. Wentworth, had he never gone to Ireland, might have averted the Civil War, and had he remained in Ireland he might have

settled the country. He was the first of the great English 'pro-consuls,' and as far as Ireland was concerned he was the last. His work perished with him in the storm of the times. Cromwell, indisputably the strongest personality of the century, did indeed leave one legacy behind him, the hatred of England's name in Ireland. But he neither originated the parliamentary attempt at power nor led it. On the contrary, he superseded it. He was the one man of genius in the struggle, if we except his secretary Milton, who in that age of loot got for his pains £300 a year; but Cromwell would have sold Parliament to the king if the king would have sold the Church to the army, and having failed to drive his bargain he quickly destroyed King and Church and Parliament, and ruled alone, a solitary figure of sombre genius, without cause and without effect. His foreign policy achieved glory at the price of bankruptcy and his home policy achieved order at the price of freedom. Of the other figures Pym enjoys a dubious immortality as the first big-business politician and Eliot as the first political careerist claiming divine Providence as his ally. As with all such there was some vile humbug and an element of genuine moral exaltation in his make-up. He was the only man that Charles I hated of all the pack that was to harry him to his death. Hampden was the honest protestor, a familiar type in our politics, as was Falkland, the 'enlightened' upholder of authority. The statesmen of the Restoration live mainly in the pages of Dryden's ferocious satires, save Clarendon, who lives in the pages of his great history and through the fame of the Clarendon Code, which excluded the Nonconformists from the Church of England and preserved the Anglican settlement to our own day. Clarendon was wise, moderate, and proud, a man of letters practising what he preached with a superfluous gravity.

It was far otherwise in the field of literature and the arts; only Milton, among the great names, failed to influence decisively the mind of the future. Even the splendour of his Virgilian rhythms found no imitators. But Wren in architecture, Newton in science, and Dryden in poetry lit fires which are still unextinguished. Wren is the father of modern London, Newton of modern science, and Dryden of modern English

prose. The Restoration comedies represent English wit at its best, and are disliked only by those who prefer the adolescent fun of deceptive appearances to the adult amusement of realities disclosed.

Much of this revival of learning, this progress in the art of living, was due to the wisdom of Charles II's conduct of foreign affairs. England's foreign policy from Cromwell's time until 1688 went through many phases, but whereas the English people under Cromwell had borne the burden of his war with the Dutch and of his attack in alliance with France on the Spanish provinces in the Low Countries, and got only Dunkirk in return, Charles II was able to maintain peace for some years, to compromise his war with the Dutch and come out with New York and New Jersey and Delaware as prizes of war. When the war was renewed in 1670, he was able to get immense subsidies from France in return for very little practical assistance. Cromwell's foreign policy was, in fact, purely traditional, based on the fear of Catholic Spain, and the dream of becoming once more an effective military power on the Continent. Glory, not gain, was his objective. The economic and political consequences were both bad. England gained great prestige but exhausted her own strength and built up that of France. Charles II, by contrast, incurred great odium by his alliance with France in 1670 and his renewal of the war with the Dutch, but he saw further than his critics. The alternative to his policy was not an Anglo-Dutch alliance against France but a Franco-Dutch alliance against England. The combination of England and Holland against the French, which ultimately challenged and, under Marlborough, mastered the armies of France in the Low Countries at the beginning of the next century, was not practical politics in 1670. The Dutch still regarded themselves as our effective challengers for the command of the seas and the colonial supremacy. They had no wish for an English alliance, for England was too exhausted financially and too politically unstable to be an effective force in a continental warfare, and what we had overseas we intended to hold, while the Dutch wished to take it away from us.

Public opinion forced Charles II into peace with the Dutch in 1674, but he continued to receive subsidies from France to

ensure his neutrality, and his threats of hostility to France, part bluff and part *real politik*, were sufficient to ensure that the subsidies continued while the country remained at peace. With the rest of Europe almost continuously engaged in dynastic wars, England enjoyed great prosperity, and almost unheeded by Louis XIV laid the secure foundation of her empire.

For Louis XIV this heedlessness was fatal, because he, and he alone, in all human probability, could have prevented William of Orange securing the English throne and adding England to the enemies of France. The English people in 1688 were divided along lines which conformed to no true class or ideological divisions. There was a great dislike of the Catholic religion. There was great sympathy with the Huguenots whose persecution had begun again in 1685. Victims of the persecution poured into England and Holland and fanned the flames of militant Protestantism. On the other hand, there was a strong feeling of loyalty to the throne and to the established order. Few were prepared, outside Scotland and Ireland, to fight for James II, but very few indeed were prepared to fight against him. It needed an elaborate machinery of treason, in the presence of an armed and resolute claimant to the throne, to bring about the revolution. The ultimate reason for its success lay in James's character. Alone of the Stuarts, James II inspired no personal loyalty, and rich men feared his obstinacy. The London mob no doubt feared foreigners in good English jobs, but the Whig leaders were of subtler mind. They feared in James that lack of flexibility which is the essential principle of Whig philosophy. James could be broken but never bent; so the Whigs went to work, and with each shock that James gave to popular prejudice the treason spread. The end came when James, deserted by the Tories who hated only his methods, tried to secure the support of the dissenters who hated his principles. With this object he proclaimed universal religious toleration. The Whig champions of liberty saw their chance of office and at once prepared to welcome an armed invader. Their Tory countrymen, tired of the plots and counter-plots which had marred twenty-eight years of prosperity, stood by and gave no sign. 'We are the English people; we have not spoken yet.'

The accession of William III opened a fateful period, during which encroachments on the freedom and dignity of men were so habitually ignored in the storm of wars that by the opening of Victoria's reign England had become the Two Nations described in Disraeli's novels. It was not so in 1688. Real wages then were far higher than they were in 1939, cottage industries were the basis of the economic order, and the completely landless labourer was still the exception rather than the rule. One hundred and eighty thousand families, a sixth of the entire population, were yeomen farmers; and of the 2,500,000 of agricultural labourers and their families the majority had some small status, if only the right of common grazing. Of the town dwellers, about a million and a half in all, the overwhelming majority were free men economically. It was the golden age of English labour and English agriculture, with wheat at 50s. a quarter and the value of the £ sterling many times what it is to-day. It was only joint-stock enterprise in overseas trade that provided financial adventurers with opportunities in the seventeenth century and provided a foretaste of what might ensue. Here were the deep foundations laid of big city fortunes, buttressed by sea power, maintained by conquest which won markets, got manufacturers, and developed those sources of cheap food and raw materials which, when the age of steam should come, were to make England the richest and the least egalitarian country in the world.

It was not a conscious process either of growth or of economic oppression which we can see at work from 1688 to 1793. Throughout the greater part of this fateful period England was fighting desperate battles with France, first for her Protestant regime, then for her political independence, then in defence of her overseas possessions. The wars of the eighteenth century were essentially defensive except, and the exception is notable, in so far as William's seizure of the English throne was in fact, though not in form, an act of aggression against France. William III, having conquered England, had to conquer Scotland and Ireland, where James II, assisted too late by the French, was active against his successor. In the next reign, under the greatest of Britain's soldiers, England became for the first time a great military power on the Continent. Where Buckingham

failed John Churchill succeeded. We kept Louis XIV from the Channel ports; we preserved the independence of Holland; we conquered Gibraltar, took from France Nova Scotia, and regained Newfoundland; we prevented the union of the French and Spanish thrones; meanwhile, we defeated two Jacobite rebellions. Throughout the century our main effort was at sea, in the East, and in the new world. We dispatched small forces first under George II and then under Cumberland to help our continental ally Austria in the war of the Austrian Succession, and in the Seven Years War we assisted our ally Prussia with a small force which fought under Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick in defence of Hanover. In the wars against Napoleon we assisted our ally Portugal from 1809 to 1813 with another small force of thirty thousand men, first under Sir John Moore and then under Wellington, but, with the almost accidental exception of Waterloo, from the end of Marlborough's campaigns until 1st July 1916, no British Army of commanding power sought a military decision on an important European battlefield. Marlborough fought Louis XIV with men; we fought his successors with money paid to Prussia; we fought Napoleon (save for the brief episode of his return) by sea power, and by the counter-blockade which forced into action the coalition which defeated him at Leipzig.

It was a policy of great hazard. From the war of the Austrian Succession we gained nothing; from the Seven Years War we gained Canada, Florida, part of Louisiana, Senegal, three West Indian Islands, and a free hand in India. In the American War of Independence, when France allied herself with the rebels in 1777, we were defeated not only by the colonists on land but by the French at sea. In 1780 an American privateer, Paul Jones, captured an English frigate in sight of Scarborough, strangely enough one of the only two English towns shelled by the enemy's fleet in the war of 1914-18; the French admiral, de Grasse, was master of the Indian Ocean, Gibraltar was besieged and the American colonies were lost. Only when, in 1782, Rodney regained command of the sea by defeating de Grasse near Saint Lucia, in the West Indies, was England able to make peace.

In all these wars we might, but for the genius of a handful of great men, have lost everything. And we won at a great price. The price was paid, not in blood, but in the neglect by the most talented generation of politicians we have ever had of many important domestic problems. The immense series of volumes of the Newcastle correspondence, for instance, contain no references of the slightest importance to the social conditions of the people or to the economic revolution already beginning, although government was and remained actively interested in promoting overseas trade and in seeing that it was carried in British ships. In 1694 our capacity for effective intervention in war had been established by the foundation of the Bank of England. The City realized that by lending money to the government it could, under the new conditions which made a working compromise between the Crown and the ministers a practical necessity, control the policy of the government over an indefinite period. The City therefore agreed to finance the French wars by loans, in return for a bank charter given to the original bondholders. As with so many revolutions, the full significance of this action was unrealized at the time. The money was intended to be repaid. The inability of successive governments to do so involved nothing less decisive than the surrender to a group of money-lenders of the sovereign's prerogative to issue money and to determine its value. The money-lenders were not unworthy of their trust. From 1794 the expansion of credit and currency began, until by 1815 the National Debt amounted roughly to the figure at which it stood at the beginning of the present century. Though crisis followed crisis, the financial interests never faltered in their resolution to defend what had become their strongly vested interest in the expansion of the British Empire. But as prices rose and the pressure grew the process of agricultural enclosure was hastened. Three thousand Enclosure Acts were passed during the century, and by its close agricultural England was the property of a few thousand great landlords. The deciding factor was the application of the capitalist method of long-term investment to scientific farming and the beginning of the machine age in industry. The small man was frozen out by the combined operation of economic stress, political impotence, and scientific

progress, for agriculture was fated to lose, in the same century that saw the enclosures, the support of weaving and spinning in the cottages and farmsteads. In 1733 John Kay invented the flying shuttle, which displaced the hand loom; and in 1764 James Hargreaves invented the spinning-jenny. Small agriculturalists and farm labourers became factory workers and the aggregation of landed wealth proceeded even more quickly. Meanwhile in the growing towns high taxation and expanding currency brought, as always, a rich and constantly increasing return to capitalist enterprise, while wages for a time lagged behind. All this happened while the energy of our rulers and the genius of our sailors was increasing, beyond all experience since the days of the Roman Empire, the extent of our territories and the value of our trade.

To the social revolution which was taking place the great orators and political managers of the golden age of English politics made no reference. While Chatham was acting the part of great statesman and Newcastle was exercising his authentic talent as a great politician a new world was coming into being, and to the task of determining the character of the transition there was found none in all that galaxy of talent ready to turn his hand.

Partly this was due to the foreign danger; but it was also true that for the men of the early eighteenth century the problems of domestic politics ended with the revolution of 1688. It is always so after great convulsions. Then, as to-day, men forgot that political settlements may conclude but can never create. Forgetting this, the post-revolution statesmen took politics to mean foreign policy. Society was an organic structure, needing for its healthy development only the fusion of economic and political power at home and protection from enemy action abroad. Essentially the doctrines of *laissez-faire* already commanded general assent, and their acceptance by the ruling power had been ratified by the settlement of 1688. It only remained to protect the already perfect structure from the challenge of France. The later Whigs, and notably Burke in his first manifestation and Fox, worshipped volubly and eloquently at the shrine of liberty, but what they meant by liberty was, in the ultimate analysis, the subordination of politics to

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property. There was in their political philosophy no place for *justice*, any more than there was in Adam Smith's economics any place for the *just price*, the fundamental and indefeasible principle of the Christian economic teaching. Our surrender of the American colonies was not dictated by principles which we should to-day call liberal. Burke's classic defence of their claims amounts, stripped of its magnificent rhetoric, to nothing more than the feeling that it was against the nature of things that English politicians should interfere with the free disposal by American property owners of their own resources. From this principle it was an easy step to the nineteenth-century doctrine of Free Trade. No consideration of social justice or amenities must interfere with the right to buy cheap and sell dear. Many men grew anxious, but there was none to guide them. Under the urgent voice of Wesley they turned in their thousands to God for comfort, but God does not work miracles in aid of the *status quo*. There was no bulwark to be found in the religious revival of the end of the century against the march or the consequences of social injustice. The revolutionary doctrines would not be stifled by magnanimity.

For a short time there had been hope of active reform. While the storm of revolution was gathering overseas a new alignment of political forces had taken place at home, and after various manœuvres William Pitt, the brilliant younger son of the great Earl of Chatham, had become Prime Minister on 19th December 1783. The event marked the chequered beginnings of the modern Tory party. Pitt had begun his political life as a Whig and was one of the first convinced advocates of parliamentary reform, Home Rule for Ireland, free trade, and the abolition of slavery. A reform of the electoral system was perhaps the most pressing need. Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, and Birmingham—all by Pitt's time important manufacturing towns—were unrepresented. Scotland had forty-five members returned by only 4,000 voters. Nineteen small Cornish boroughs returned thirty-five members. Out of the 513 members for England and Wales, 254 sat for constituencies which contained only 11,500 voters in all. So narrow were the franchises that 162 individual peers and country gentlemen could, with the Treasury, nominate 306 members of the House

of Commons. The government of India was a scandal nearly as great, since the East India Company ruled unchecked and uncontrolled over what had become a vast empire. As a private member Pitt agitated for the reform of the franchise and supported his lifelong friend Wilberforce over slavery. As Prime Minister, before his hopes and plans were overwhelmed by the storms of the French Revolution and then of war with France, he created the dual system of government in India which lasted until 1857, safeguarded the rights of the French Canadians, reduced the tariffs between France and England, attempted but failed to introduce free trade between England and Ireland, made a small beginning of Catholic emancipation, and introduced but failed to pass an important measure of electoral reform. He passed measures for regulating the transport of slaves in British ships and prohibiting the importation of slaves into Guiana. Finally, he supported the impeachment of Warren Hastings.

In all these matters, save the last, he has been attacked for having done so little. He was, however, the first politician of the first rank to do anything at all in regard to any of them, except that Burke and Fox had attempted Indian reform and failed to achieve it. Splendid though Pitt's record was as War Minister, he (and his party) have had to pay at the bar of history an unduly heavy price for his fame, for he is remembered as a politician solely as the author of those unpopular and restrictive measures for the 'Defence of the Realm' which in a great crisis all Prime Ministers are compelled to adopt. The Tory party thus inevitably and quite wrongly became identified with the opposition to many of those progressive measures of reform of which, in fact, Pitt was the first important advocate, and which were later to find a far more vigorous champion in Benjamin Disraeli than in William Ewart Gladstone.

It is easy, indeed, to be unjust not only to the historical ancestors of the Tories of to-day but to the whole eighteenth-century attitude to social reform. There were no party caucuses; there were only loose associations of personalities bound together by political or personal friendship and cemented by the interested manipulation of 'places' and patronage. Even a man of genius like Pitt could not effectively manage the

House of Commons in peace-time. Most of the rest were content to be managed by it. Nevertheless, the activities of Burke and Pitt make it clear that there was much reforming zeal, and if there had been no French Revolution and no Napoleonic Wars there is no reason to doubt that an age of systematic reform would have begun at least a generation and perhaps two generations before it did. With our eyes on the economic consequences of the agricultural and industrial revolutions which were by no means completed by 1789, we must not forget that the century opened in great and well-diffused prosperity, and that the wise rule of Walpole, building on the foundations secured by the genius of Marlborough, ensured peace and ordered security for a whole generation. As late as 1760, when George II died, the great social changes were only beginning, and the fundamental problems of the new industrial system were not disclosed. Frederick the Great was still alive; Napoleon was not yet born; the spinning-jenny was not yet invented; James Watt and Matthew Boulton had not yet begun that partnership which was to change the face of the world. Dr. Johnson, who was born in the reign of Queen Anne and died in 1784, almost bridged the gulf between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, but even as late as his day our foundations seemed well laid and our achievement seemed not only secure but honourable.

Eighteenth-century satire and criticism, architecture and painting, the novel and the news-sheet, give us the picture of a life lived easily on a high altitude; the striving over; the self-criticism not yet collapsed into self-distrust. The portraits of Reynolds and Gainsborough, the prose of Addison and Steele and Johnson, the poetry of Pope, the letters of Horace Walpole, and the stately periods of Gibbon achieve serenity and possess finality. They summarize an epoch. The men of this age, we see at a glance, are not remembering the habits and echoing the accents of a past society. They are themselves the originals. They have created their own age. They are speaking for the first time in accents now over-familiar in the mouths of a whole series of inadequate imitations of great men, some of them lathes painted to look like iron, but most of them, to-day, not even painted. We speak wrongly of the eighteenth century as

an age of great families. It was a great age. England has known since no orators, no actors, no critics, no satirists, no generals, no admirals, and no heroes of the stature common in those days. Systems asphyxiate. Only in India and Africa could heroes find employment in the Victorian age. To-day they can only kill themselves in teaching others to kill on an ever grander scale. In the eighteenth century they had the chance not to destroy but to build.

Only towards the very end of the century a note of hysteria creeps in. The foundations were shaking; the industrial revolution had launched the great Augustans into quite uncharted seas. The navy mutinied; London rioted; Ireland rebelled. Across the narrow seas dynasties collapsed. Idealists, soldiers, revolutionaries, and other *arrivistes* had shattered the world's peace. The French Revolution began.

And so we come to the opening of controversies still urgent. The men of property had destroyed Catholicism, destroyed the popular monarchy, flirted with, but finally defeated, Calvinism to find themselves, at the dawn of the modern age, face to face with the forces of the revolution. They had destroyed the throne and the altar and had had time to put in their place nothing but themselves. Now they must fight alone.

So far they had preserved their inheritance. The power and the glory still shone. In all lands and under all the seas lay the bones of Englishmen who had loved their country and served her. That the men of the eighteenth century had done their duty as they saw it is evident to all. Even the absolute power which they enjoyed came to them by inheritance. It was not they who had stolen or murdered and betrayed. It was not they who had denied either their God or their allegiance. Remembering this, we can understand better the serenity that shines from their portraits, the cadences of their magnificent orations, the superb assurance of their critics, the easy certainties of their moralists. The age of chivalry might die elsewhere, but their England was to live, and they would concede nothing which might imperil her. Even Fox surrendered to the claims of his country at last and joined in the battle without regret.

It was not an age of regrets; the Augustans saw clear, if not below the surface. They were not afraid of scandal; they lived hard, drank deep, and loved recklessly. They had courage, pride, and dignity and no sentiment at all; but when the challenge came they met it with resolution. They were men, and they saved the state.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

THE ORGANIZATION of the first great coalition against revolutionary France in 1793 marks the end of the *ancien régime* in Europe. The nineteenth century is known as the century of liberal reform which began in England in 1822, when Canning succeeded Castlereagh at the Foreign Office, and men felt that the country could safely withdraw from continental politics and take up again those reforms which had engaged the attention of William Pitt in his first administration, but for which the need, thirty years later, was urgent and bitter. Yet it was not the impulse for reforms but the decisive events of those thirty intervening years, and our action in them, which determined the shape of things to come. The same causes remained to be resolved, the same injustices to be removed, but in the interval we had become, quite as markedly as the United States in the thirty years between 1914 and 1944, a different people—citizens of a nation enjoying a pre-eminence of military and economic power and a nation conscious of world-wide responsibilities for the destinies of millions of people.

One decisive factor was the slightness of the impact of the great struggle first with the Directory and then with Napoleon on the daily life of our own people. There were brief periods when disorder threatened but, by and large, the period was one of expanding trade, expanding revenue, and a sense of security. It has often been remarked how little the great literature of this period in England reflects the life and death struggle which was going on at our doors. Some political effusions, for one can hardly rate them more highly, of Southey, Lamb, Wordsworth, and Coleridge on the one hand, and of Byron and Shelley on the other, reflect first our sentimental enthusiasm for other people's revolutions, then our fear of invasion, and then, the

wheel having come full circle, our moral indignation at political 'reaction,' while Byron, in the twenties, reflects the disillusion seemingly inseparable from any disinterested intervention in the politics of Greece. But these ephemeral writings survive by reason of their political interest; they are, with few exceptions, without literary importance. The creative effort of these tremendous years lay in quite other directions. The lyrical ballads, Coleridge's Shakespearian criticism, the first novels of Jane Austen, Scott, and Disraeli, the odes of Keats, the political philosophy of John Stuart Mill, reflect a secure age and an assured income with a clarity which serves to remind us, to quote a profound observation of H. A. L. Fisher, that while the Russian revolution of 1917 was an attack on property, the French revolution of 1789 was only an attack on privilege. And in any case the French Revolution was brought quickly under control by the French themselves.

Napoleon himself was no social but only a political revolutionary, neither a Hitler nor a Stalin but a Mussolini of genius. He offered no deliberate threat to the social or economic foundation of society. His wars were begun, like the wars of the *ancien régime*, to extend the area of French jurisdiction, not to promote a revolution in defiance of jurisdiction. Napoleon rescued France from the revolution and he was far from wishing to impose it on the rest of the world. Unfortunately, in the process of conquering half the world, Napoleon became the Man of Destiny, who had destroyed the lawgivers and therefore became himself the law. It was this assumption of unlimited military and political power over all Europe which Pitt and his successors fought, but it was the logic of events, not the will of the protagonists, which made the war decisive for the nineteenth century. If we had lost the war France would have been supreme in Europe and America. When she lost it, we became so. But the war had not begun as a fight for political, economic, and military supremacy but as a challenge to usurpation. Its results, which were cataclysmic, were unintended, although they could have been foreseen because they followed from the pattern necessarily imposed on the war by the opposition of a great military continental power and an island power whose whole strength was on the sea.

In any war between two such powers the sea power must first of all set out to destroy the seaborne trade and the sea communications of the enemy. If this action is without effect in the enemy's land operations, as was the case when Hitler attacked Poland in 1939,¹ then the land power will achieve its aim. If, as in the case of our long war against Philip II, our eighteenth-century wars against France, our war against Napoleon, and our war against the Kaiser's Germany, the land power has overseas possessions, or is in need of overseas supplies which can be cut off by blockade, or has vital sea communications as was the case with Philip II, the land power must react in one of two ways—it must try to break the blockade by itself bringing the enemy fleet to action, or by conquering other powers with a coast line and a fleet and so restoring by military action the balance of naval power, or it must try to destroy the source of the naval power by invading and conquering the country on which it is based.

To these threats the sea power must invariably reply in the same way. It must, by simultaneous action over a wide area, keep the enemy's inferior naval forces scattered and so available for destruction piecemeal. It must at the same time contrive to keep a fleet in being in case the enemy decides to effect a concentration of his forces at the price of the temporary loss of his overseas trade or possessions. Further, the sea power must always sustain the military power of a continental ally to minimize the risk of invasion and, in our case, to deny its enemy the control of the cross-channel ports. Finally, if its continental allies fail (as ours had failed in 1940) or their pressure is insufficient (as in the case of Russia in 1943–44) it must itself risk a continental invasion when the enemy has been sufficiently exhausted by military attrition or economic privation. Sea power, however predominant, has never yet defeated military power without engaging and defeating its enemy on land.

The nature of these actions and reactions, which inevitably ensue when a great land power fights a great sea power, is such that the victory of one over the other is unusually decisive. A naval power which either loses command of the sea, whether

¹ With Russia allied to Germany, as in 1939, no blockade could be effective.

in battle or through the occupation of its base by an invading force, loses everything: it has nothing left to fight with. A land power which fails to break a blockade and suffers privations to the point when it is itself invaded, has lost the final battle before it has begun. The great temptation of the land power in such a war is to exhaust itself in continental conquests to the neglect of the sea enemy. The great temptation of the sea power is to attempt invasion too soon and with too little force, or, alternatively, to rely too much on dubious or faint-hearted allies to fight its land battles. Our war with revolutionary France and Napoleon lasted twenty-two years because both protagonists succumbed repeatedly to these temptations.

The first coalition comprised Austria, Prussia, Sardinia, Naples, Spain, and Portugal. England joined the coalition when France attacked our long-standing ally Holland, thereby threatening the invasion of our coasts, on the one hand, and the security of our communications with India via the Cape of Good Hope (then a Dutch possession) on the other. Hoping to avoid the necessity of a prolonged naval war we went to the assistance of our allies on land and sent expeditions to Flanders, to Toulon, and to Corsica, all of which ended in disaster. The war became bitterly unpopular and popular agitation demanded sweeping reforms at home and peace with the revolutionaries abroad. In this the mob was supported by the intelligentsia, including Coleridge, Southey, and Lamb, and by Fox's Whigs, whose attitude to the French Revolution was as generous, as inane, and as fatal to their party as that of the Manchester Liberals to the Russian revolution of 1917. Their initial sympathy, born of a generous instinct for reform, and of that hatred of privilege in other countries with which middle-class Englishmen habitually placate their consciences, was defensible, if not necessarily admirable. But when it had become apparent that what had ensued from the revolution was not the beginning but the end of liberty, not the rule of law but the end of law, the Whig panegyrics of the revolution continued and were not even abated when Napoleon, seizing control by armed force, set out on the military domination of all the free peoples on the Continent. For the allies the war went from bad to worse. The Low Countries were lost, Italy was lost, Prussia made peace

with France, Spain was occupied. England was saved from invasion by naval victories, in the Channel in 1794 and off Cape St. Vincent in 1796, but in 1797 the three per cents fell to forty-seven, the fleet mutinied, and in the last week of that year the first income tax was introduced amid tremendous outcries and loud prophecies of disaster. Despite Nelson's great victory at the battle of the Nile in August 1798 and the formation of a new coalition—Russia, Austria, and Great Britain—against France, nothing prospered except at sea, the 'Army of England' was still in being across the Channel, while Lord Edward FitzGerald's rebellion in Ireland was a fresh source of anxiety and a further strain on our military resources. The defeat of the Austrians at Marengo and Hohenlinden in 1800 and Nelson's victory at Copenhagen in April of the following year emphasized the stalemate: France was master of Europe; England ruled at sea.

The sequel was the Peace of Amiens, based on a profound misunderstanding by the new British Government under Addington (Pitt had resigned on Catholic emancipation, to which George III refused to agree) both of the issues at stake and of the realities of the military situation.

The critical years were in fact passed. There was, by 1802, no longer any fear either of revolutionary disturbance in England or of invasion from without. England had become by virtue of her growing sea power and her growing overseas possessions, with which her communications were now assured, a self-sufficient economic unit. The wealth of the new world was at her disposal as the result not of political sovereignty but of the mastery of the sea. France, on the other hand, had entirely lost her commerce and was financially exhausted. In the circumstances it was France, under Napoleon, by now First Consul, who needed peace and to whom peace should therefore have been refused except on British terms.

The British Government saw only that peace was obtainable because of France's needs, and assumed, as President Roosevelt so fatally assumed in the case of Russia in 1944, that, because they themselves had no other wish than to remain at peace with the world and develop their greatly expanded trade, therefore France could have no further or different objective.

Napoleon's objective, however, like Marshal Stalin's, was power, not commerce, and the Peace of Amiens placed him once again in a position to attempt the mastery of the west, for he got back possession of his overseas empire, including the sugar islands and the French ports and factories in India. Of all her conquests Britain retained only Trinidad and Ceylon. Then she proceeded to disarm.

Fortunately, after Amiens, disillusion came so quickly that neither the technique nor the tradition of victory at sea had been lost when the fight was resumed in May 1803. Once again invasion threatened, but a new continental coalition drew off Napoleon to win his historic victories at Ulm, Austerlitz, and Jena while the Franco-Spanish fleet was defeated by Nelson at Trafalgar. Nevertheless, Russia deserted the coalition and allied herself with Napoleon at Tilsit in 1806; once more France was master of Europe and again England expected invasion. Now the danger was deadly because Napoleon for the first time had a chance to get together a fleet at least equal to that opposed to him. His plans were based on securing control by military operations of the fleets of Portugal, Denmark, and Sweden. The British Government, instigated by Canning, anticipated him and secured by a combined naval and military expedition the surrender of the Danish fleet. Portugal, our oldest ally, also handed over her fleet, although not until the French were in the suburbs of Lisbon. The threat of invasion was thus finally removed and Napoleon was driven back on the counter-blockade, the closing to English ships and English cargoes of every port in Europe.

The speed with which the British Cabinet met the new and deadly threat was admirable and rare in our history. We must nevertheless remember that we were also supremely fortunate in having to fight the greatest military genius in modern history at a time when the movement of land forces was slower than the movement of fleets. As the result of our monopoly of sea power we had the whole of the trade of the new world in our hands, and the resulting wealth, added to our sea power, gave us the strategic initiative. We could land troops when we liked and subsidize allies. Napoleon's continental system failed because a conqueror who brings scarcity in his train

cannot hope indefinitely to hold his conquests. Clandestine organizations grew up for smuggling British goods into the Continent and the smugglers paid high prices. The result was to put money into British pockets and demoralize the continental economy. Every country looked forward to the day when it would feel strong enough to defy Napoleon's orders, open its ports to English shipping, and buy the world's goods once again in abundance at fair prices.

Spain was the first to rebel against French domination and to provide the British with the essential foothold on the Continent. In 1811 Russia, too, opened her ports and Napoleon, rightly seeing the beginning of the end, marched on Moscow; 1812 saw the end of the Napoleonic legend; 1815 saw the end of Napoleon. To the English foreign secretary, Lord Castlereagh, the chief credit is due for the diplomatic measures which brought and held Russia, Prussia, and Austria together with Great Britain for the final campaign in 1813. To Wellington belongs the chief credit for the terms offered and accepted by France after the abdication of Napoleon and for the less generous but still lenient terms imposed on France after Waterloo.

The settlement of 1815 was enduring; it did what it intended to do and preserved the balance of power in Europe for a hundred years. It was based on realities, not on desires; on what was possible, not on what we liked to think possible. The problem was not to create a world of free, self-determined nationalities but an enduring balance of great powers. In so doing the Treaty of Vienna added more to the sum of future happiness than any other diplomatic instrument in history. The European balance permitted, first, the peaceful settlement of the North American continent (where war between Britain and the United States over the rights of search at sea had broken out in 1812 and been settled by a face-saving compromise in 1814) by the demilitarization of the Canadian frontier; secondly, the peaceful achievement of independence by the secession states of Latin America; thirdly, the proclamation, with tacit British support, of the Monroe Doctrine, which put a term to non-North American imperialism on the American continent, and, fourthly, joint action against the Turks and the

consequent liberation of Greece. Finally, and most decisively, the European balance allowed the immense potentialities of the new industrial skills, backed by the new credit machinery, to be developed for the ends of peace to the enrichment of all mankind.

For these immense benefits Europe and the new world were indebted firstly to Nelson and Wellington, the only two commanders of genius among all the allies, and secondly to two men who soon became the most hated statesmen in Europe, Castlereagh and Metternich, although a word must be said for Lord Liverpool, Disraeli's 'arch-mediocrity' who was Prime Minister from 1812 to 1827, and more than a word for George Canning, who, when Foreign Secretary in the Portland administration from 1807 to 1809, forced on the Cabinet the decisive actions which led to the surrender to Britain of the Danish and Portuguese fleets, who was responsible for our equally decisive intervention on the side of the rebels in Spain in 1809, and who, as Foreign Secretary after Castlereagh's suicide in 1822, recognized the independence of the insurgent Spanish colonists.

Canning was regarded by Wellington as a Jacobin. Castlereagh was lampooned by Shelley as a murderer. To succeeding ages, and not least to our own, Wellington, Metternich, and Castlereagh have been denounced as vicious reactionaries. The epithet is silly; the noun is justified; they were reacting with supreme skill and a complete indifference to public opinion from war and disorder. A century, fortunately for mankind, was to elapse before it became the accepted doctrine that the function of foreign secretaries was to set up a political system corresponding to the public opinion of the moment, then to disarm, and then to threaten with universal wrath, ending in universal war, any to whom the new construction appeared unworthy, undesirable, or disadvantageous. It was the supreme merit of the architects of the settlement of 1815, who were also responsible for the peaceful evolution of the twelve years which followed, that they saw the nature of the new problem and found a solution. Our total failure to emulate their success has been due not to lack of practical skill but to our ignorance of the nature of the problem we have to face.

The *ancien régime*, like the feudal system, had operated within

a closed moral system. This did not mean that it operated with kid gloves or that its protagonists were effeminate nonentities. It meant merely that it was a condition of its operations that the social order was not to be disturbed, that any conflicts concerned the profits, if any, of jurisdiction, not the property or the personal rights of those over whom jurisdiction was sought. Napoleon, in his final phase as the Man of Destiny, had altered that. He had overthrown constitutions, destroyed one law and imposed a new one, cast down the mighty from their seats, and exalted the humble. He had proclaimed a new law from a new Sinai and many had found it advantageous. It was, however, apparent to the statesmen of Vienna that the world could not live or let live if every outbreak of war was in future to involve not the adjustment of a boundary or tariff or the barter of a trading post against a coaling station, but the complete destruction of the law, constitution, and commerce now of this nation and now of that. The very working of Napoleon's continental system and of the British blockade had taught them that. Trade was now beginning to be conducted on banker's credit. Capital was being invested in foreign countries by the great creditor nations. The new system indicated that, with the industrialization of Western Europe and the opening up of the American continent at a great pace, there might be a vast outpouring of goods of all kinds which would raise the standard of living of western man to heights undreamed of. But peace was the supreme necessity. The new national and ideological warfare was altogether too anarchic.

Yet the men of Vienna were supremely conscious that a new force had entered on the stage of history. It was the public opinion of France which had made her astonishing campaigns possible. It was British public opinion which had sustained Pitt in the years of endurance and Canning and Wellington and Castlereagh in the years of victory. It was public opinion which threatened to wreck the peace. The indeterminate but none the less effective sanctions of the *ancien régime* had gone. The limits imposed on political action by traditions rooted in the distant past, traditions as opposed to the claims of power to omniscience abroad as they were to the claim of the people to omniscience at home, these limits were abrogated. A

nation in arms, once on the march, could only be stopped by the counter-marching of other nations. Something which the statesmen of that generation had not yet learnt to call total war, but which Metternich at least fully foresaw, would be the almost inevitable price of any breakdown in the new order which the Congress of Vienna set out to create. To blame the men of Vienna because for that very reason they refused to do anything which involved the risk of a breakdown—because they refused to set up a system rooted in the discontent and hostility of one or more great powers, but insisted on a system sustained by all the great powers in a state of balance, is not merely foolish : it is criminally frivolous ; and on those who have lightly drawn such heedless lessons from the past rests no small part of the guilt of the failure to achieve a secure peace in 1918.

The political aspirations of Poland and Saxony were sacrificed to the needs of an accord and a balance between Prussia, Austria, and Russia, but it was precisely the merit of the regime thus re-established that there was no consequent invasion of personal rights, of economic freedom, or of the rights of conscience, nor did the inhabitants of the countries enjoy less political liberty than would have been granted to them by the rulers of an independent Poland or an independent and sovereign Saxony. Nationality is not an ethical principle but a working compromise in the interests of the common man between the claims of race and the needs of government, and it is of the essence of the compromise that it can be made to work. If it cannot the interests of the common man are not safeguarded but fatally prejudiced by the assertion of nationality in the face of incompatible facts. The Vienna settlement endured because the great powers were satisfied by it, because it left no vital questions unanswered, and because all continental powers, including the defeated power, France, were prepared to underwrite it. Because of this the liberation of Greece from the Turks and of the South American republic from Spain and Portugal and the diplomatic revolution embodied in the Monroe Doctrine, proclaimed in 1823, were all carried through without menacing the world's peace. Finally, when Castlereagh died and Canning succeeded to the Foreign Office in 1822, we were able safely to disengage ourselves from active intervention in

the internal affairs of the peoples of the Continent and to assert as the main principle of our policy the preservation of peace.

‘For this purpose,’ Canning wrote to his cousin in 1824, ‘it is necessary in the first place to prevent to the utmost of our power the breaking out of new quarrels; in the second place, to compose, where it can be done by friendly mediation, existing differences; and thirdly, where that is hopeless, to narrow as much as possible their range; and fourthly to maintain for ourselves an imperturbable neutrality in all cases where nothing occurs to affect injuriously our interests or our honour.’

From 1827 to the close of the century England was roused to European action only by one repeated threat—the threat of Russia to occupy Constantinople. The danger of allowing a great empire an outlet to the Mediterranean, threatening our maritime supremacy and our Eastern communications, aroused fears which became more acute as the century wore on. These fears were reasonable, but they were hardly sufficient to justify our political support of the discreditable Turkish regime, a support interrupted only by periodical outbursts of moral indignation at its methods and by ill-requited assistance to the cause of Greek independence, which was achieved in 1827, when the Turkish navy was sunk at Navarino by the fleets of England, France, and Russia.

Seven years before this George IV had come to the throne after a regency of nine years. The scandals of his court have provided much material for popular historians ever since, but its luxury and licentiousness left no mark on our history. It is a facile error to suppose that the Victorian rigidity was a reaction from the gaieties of those less decorous days. It was the result of the rise to power of a new class which brought its own standards from private into public life. That class was the new aristocracy of industry and commerce which had come to the front in the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century and was now to dominate England until the power passed to the financiers, the speculators, and the impresarios at the close of the Victorian period.

The nineteenth-century economic system was the logical consequence of the impact of the ideas of the French Revolution on a practical nation disinclined to speculation and uninterested

in politics. The nineteenth century inherited from Burke the doctrine of an organic society and from the French encyclopaedists the doctrine of man's natural virtue. The only possible deduction was that the release of economic forces from the control of politicians would result in the development and utilization of national resources to the utmost possible extent and in the wisest possible manner. Because the first part of this deduction was true, England flourished exceedingly. Because the second part of it is only partly true, many Englishmen suffered greatly as the price of the nation's prosperity. The free play of economic forces will invariably tend to a rich but not necessarily to a good society. In so far as the Victorian age proved the exception it is because the history of Victorian politics is the history of an effort by the political classes to temper the wind of capitalism to the shorn lambs of the manufacturing districts. Only the countryside was forgotten, because the driving force of the reforms came from the new bourgeoisie of the towns, whose numbers had increased fourfold in the thirty years after Waterloo.

Very soon after Waterloo popular agitation for reforms, suspended since 1793, save for a spasmodic outbreak in 1797 and 1798, became the order of the day. Every one started 'movements'; Catholics were emancipated; national education began; trade unions were made legal; the penal code was made much more humane; and, finally, Parliament reformed itself, seeking, by a characteristic Whig compromise, to preserve the exclusive representation of property by a slight extension of the franchise, the extinction of rotten boroughs, the grant of representation to the new industrial towns, and much lip-service to the doctrine of popular government. The device, like all Whig compromises, was effective only during the lifetime of its authors. The great 'movements' of the century now gathered pace: the reform of the Poor Law, the institution of the Factory Acts, the establishment of the Board of Education, and the Repeal of the Corn Laws. It all seemed remarkably successful. The devouring red flames of the gospel of humanity faded into the pale embers of humanitarianism, the sword was put back into the scabbard, and, with the refreshing alternatives of the factory and the workhouse before him, the working man turned to the task of

expanding British industry at the expense of English agriculture. In 1851 out of a total population of 21,000,000, 1,750,000 persons were employed in agriculture. In 1931, when the population had risen to 45,000,000, the number employed in agriculture had fallen to 1,200,000. Meanwhile, the price of wheat fell from something over 50s. at the end of the seventeenth century to 22s. 10d. in 1894 and even lower in 1934. The country gentlemen went into the city and their tenants into the slums. Man was remembered at the polling booth. The community of the realm finally perished in the mean streets. The age of freedom was at its zenith.

Labour under the Free Trade system was no exception to the golden rule that wise men bought cheap and sold dear, nor were employers of labour exceptions to the new morality which taught that riches were a mark of divine favour. The Factory Acts were the creation of the Tory party. The authentic Liberal doctrine was expressed in the destruction of the old Poor Law, under which the magistrates, out of the local rates, were subsidizing wages. It was a curious and pathetic survival—about the last—of the old tradition of the central government as the defender of the poor against local exactions. A new tradition was coming into being. It was for trade, not men, that divine Providence had decreed freedom. England had ceased to be the mother of Englishmen. She had discovered a higher destiny as a coal-producing island at the mouth of the Rhine.

Amid the regulated turmoil of this new age Victoria came to the throne, and began the longest reign of English history as the sovereign of the richest, the most powerful, and the most orderly nation in the world. The convulsions of 1848 might send Metternich into exile, destroy the French monarchy, and shake the papacy; but in England the forces of revolution were represented by the last survivor of the eighteenth century, expressing from his seat in the Foreign Office England's sympathy with the popular movement in every country except her own, and by a petition from the Chartists carried to Westminster in a cab escorted by police. That is what history proudly tells us. But Liberalism, like revenge, is a dish best eaten cold. What has mattered in the long run to the heirs of

the Victorian age is not its virtue, which was great, but its thought, which was impotent.

Emerging from behind the retreating façade of the eighteenth century, the conjoint forces of Liberalism and secularism moved slowly but inexorably into the foreground. One eccentric genius challenged the popular philosophies. Benjamin Disraeli foresaw the modern chaos of competitive exports, the lack of social cohesion involved in the ruin of agriculture, the lack of moral basis for the new economics of Manchester. The last point was the most important. As the century advanced further efforts were made to draw the teeth of the rising Radicalism by judicious and sometimes generous reforms. Wakefield preached the virtues of emigration. The churches discovered the social problem, the Salvation Army called sinners to repentance tempered by relief. Charles Dickens pleaded for brighter workhouses; the franchise was extended by Disraeli, and voting made secret by Gladstone. By the Forster Act of 1870 a state school was provided for every parish which lacked a church school. Four hundred years too late an end was put to the enclosure of commons. The first Housing Act was passed by Disraeli's first and last administration, which also passed the great Public Health Act of 1875 which is still the basis of our public health legislation. Even the army was reformed. As the years went on the movement gathered pace. Education was made compulsory by the Liberals in 1880 and free by the Conservatives in 1891. In 1884 the third great Reform Bill extended the franchise to all householders.

Meanwhile there had been immense industrial progress. The industrial revolution was not a nineteenth- but an eighteenth-century event and factory production had long preceded the machine age, but the wholesale displacement of the domestic by the factory system in the wool and cotton industries which came with the new machinery, altered the face of town and country alike. Partly because the statesmen of the eighteenth century were too preoccupied, and mainly because 'the whole economic outlook of the eighteenth century was permeated by an encroaching individualism,'¹ the State completed that abdication of its authority over business and its conduct which had

¹ E. Lipson, *The Growth of English Society* (A. & C. Black, 1949).

in part been enforced on the Crown by the Parliament in the preceding century. Wage control had been openly abandoned in the case of the woollen industry, still the premier industry, in 1757 and this revolutionary decision gave to the principles of *laissez-faire* their first positive legislative sanction. But long before that employers had, in fact, ceased to be required to keep their men in employment in times of depression and the national regulation of apprenticeship had fallen into abeyance. Finally, and most significantly, the powers and privileges of the old craft guilds had virtually lapsed by the end of the eighteenth century. This was, in fact, because the psychological climate was against them. Every one felt that trade and industry should be open to all. It became unnecessary, however, to legislate the guilds out of their dominant position, because the geographical extension of industry, first into the suburbs of the old towns and then, and more decisively, into new towns such as Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, and Halifax, which knew nothing of the ancient customs, and where the guilds possessed no franchises, took much of the new industry out of their orbit and made it impossible for them to maintain restrictions even when they had the prescriptive right to do so.

It is therefore quite untrue that the *laissez-faire* system was either discovered or popularized by Adam Smith, or that it was the specific creation of the nineteenth century. The immense economic progress of the nineteenth century was due, first and foremost, to the wisdom of the statesmen who laid the foundations of a century of relative peace for the whole world, a century in which there were few wars and in which those that occurred were successfully localized. As far as England was concerned, the industrial supremacy which we obtained early in the century and kept until its close was due to a complex of causes, of which it can plausibly be argued that the most decisive was the compromise solution of our constitutional problems at the Restoration in 1660. The merchants, the manufacturers, and the bankers came to political influence and so gained the power of independent action a century earlier than elsewhere. We were correspondingly more receptive of the great inventions of the eighteenth century. Secondly, the population of England was relatively stationary during the eighteenth century. There

was, therefore, much less popular resistance to the general introduction of machinery. Thirdly, we were a wheat-exporting country when the machine age began and could therefore supply labour to the new factories without depreciating our standard of living. These conditions gave us a long start in the race for industrial supremacy. Add to them the unlimited power already available to us in our highly developed coal-fields, the virtual monopoly of the world's carrying trade, which we had won in Napoleonic wars, our control of the resources of India, Canada, Australia, and our predominant position in the great new markets opened up in South America, and the picture becomes intelligible.

It only remained to find a method of feeding our growing industrial population and of securing for our factories and machine shops the necessary raw materials. These problems were solved by the return to Pitt's ideal of free trade, as embodied in his still-born treaty with France in 1786, and by the development of the technique of overseas capital investment both within and without the empire.

The material benefits of our industrial expansion took the form, firstly, of a vast increase in population and, secondly, of an increase even greater in the standard of living of the whole people. The population increased from 9,000,000 in 1800 to 33,000,000 in 1900. Meanwhile during the second half of the nineteenth century nominal wages rose in the cotton industry by 100 per cent., in agriculture by 60 per cent, and in the heavy industries by 50 per cent. Real wages rose to a substantially greater extent and were nearly, if not quite, doubled between the middle and the end of the century. Per head of the population we were retaining out of our imports in 1850 1·30 lb. of butter, 1·38 lb. of cheese, 81·76 lb. of wheat and flour, 24·79 lb. of sugar, 3·84 (number) eggs, and no meat. In 1900 the corresponding figures were 9 lb. of butter, 7·20 lb. of cheese, 244 lb. of wheat, 87 lb. of sugar, 49 eggs, and 54 lb. of meat, which for the first time had become by the end of the century a staple article of diet in unlimited supply for all classes.

The combination of rising wages, increasing imports of cheap food at falling prices, and the creation of vast capital assets at home and abroad represents an achievement unique in human

history. It was the result of a century of hard work for long hours and of systematic thrift exalted to the point of being almost the chief of the virtues. Yet four considerations make it difficult, if not impossible, for those who have grown up in the twentieth century to appraise this remarkable achievement fairly.

Firstly we take the principal achievement for granted. We were a small people of no special importance in the world when the century began. We were the most densely populated country in the world when the century ended, with the highest standard of life ever known in Europe, and the greatest world power since the great days of Rome. Those who are heirs to the men who performed this astonishing miracle of change in three generations may say, if they wish, that they would prefer not to have been born, but it is useless for them to wish that they had been born of parents who worked less hard and spent their surplus in pleasure and leisure instead of investing it for the benefit of the future. Those who are vocal with their high-sounding and somewhat sanctimonious complaints should at least remember that without parents there can be no children and that the fourfold expansion of population accompanied by a much more than fourfold expansion of industry and commerce was the condition which alone allows of 45,000,000 critics of Victorianism being alive to-day. We have only got to consider how much it is costing to clear the paltry number of acres between County Hall and Waterloo Bridge for the 1951 exhibition to realize that under present conditions not one of our great cities, or those of any other country for that matter, could even have been built.

Secondly, we have lived into an age which considers it wrong that great fortunes should accumulate in private hands. The great wealth of the privileged classes in the Victorian age seems to most of us to-day something which is wrong in itself and we are not therefore at all ready to consider whether, if that wealth had been swept into the public purse as soon as it was created (instead of being invested in new plant and equipment or in developing the new world on whose charity we now live), the great expansion of wealth would ever have taken place, whether the working-class standard of life would not in time have fallen

instead of rising, and whether we should not by 1900 have been quite as unable, as we are to-day after fifty years of socialistic policies, to pay for the vast imports of food necessary to sustain our economy.

Thirdly, this century has seen such a constant and rapid rise in prices that it is almost impossible, psychologically, to think ourselves back into an age of stable and very low prices, so stable that wholesale prices at the end of the nineteenth century were actually lower than at the beginning, and so low in comparison with those of the present day that comparisons of wage rates have no meaning at all. Further, we live in an age where leisure is the accepted goal of effort. The five-day week and the seven-hour day are the accepted marks of a just and wholesome economy. The nineteenth century began with a twelve-hour day and ended with a ten-hour day and there was no minimum wage. There were, therefore, grave abuses in under-organized industries and these abuses monopolize the attention of a perfectionist generation which has been taught to be socially conscious before being productive.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, we live in an age which has come to take for granted an unlimited outpouring of public money on every conceivable object. That, even after two world wars, there is still money available to pay out on public health, education, and pensions is, in fact, not a criticism of the meanness and callousness of our forefathers but a tribute to the immense strength of the economy which they built up and the resources which they conserved. But it is not in human nature to feel indebted to the past and we do not wish to feel that what we like to regard as the superior generosity of our age is really nothing more high-minded than the distribution among ourselves of the capital assets inherited from our grandfathers.

We must not suppose for a moment that the exalted sentiments of our contemporary reformers are peculiar to this age. The utterance of elevated sentiments is the favourite occupation of Englishmen, and the men of the Victorian age indulged in it freely. Moreover, according to their lights, they possessed a very active social conscience, but it issued in political rather than in economic reforms. These reforms were the common interest of the two great political parties as they developed during the

course of the century. English politics from 1815 until 1916 remained rigidly plutocratic. The late Lord Oxford created a precedent in 1894 by returning to his practice at the Bar after having held the office of Home Secretary, but the furtive flitting of politicians between Whitehall and the City was unnecessary throughout the Victorian age. If, broadly, the Establishment and the squirearchy supported the Conservatives, while the City, the Nonconformists, and the world of commerce were Liberal, the reason was more social than political. Free Trade ceased to be an issue in 1846 and constitutional reform in 1832. Both parties accepted the claims of capitalist enterprise to dispose of the national income as was most profitable on a long-term view of the national interest, and with low taxation there was no temptation to take short views. The bitterest political conflict of the century was over Irish Home Rule, which at one time or another both parties were prepared to concede, and which, in the end, neither conceded. Disraeli had provided the Tory party with a philosophy but not with a policy, and to this day no one has ventured so far to break the tradition of English politics as to inscribe a philosophy on the Statute Book. Every great reform (to use the word in its conventional sense) since 1832 has been carried through by those who had longest opposed it or were traditionally least interested in it. The repeal of the Corn Laws was carried by the Tory Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel; the first great extension of the franchise by Disraeli; the army was reformed by Mr. Gladstone; Home Rule was granted to Ireland by a Tory majority in 1921; and protection conceded by a Socialist Prime Minister in 1931. Old age pensions, first proposed by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, were introduced by the Liberals. The navy was rebuilt by Lord Fisher under a Liberal administration in face of the vigorous opposition offered by a Tory, Lord Charles Beresford. The Tory squires were the bitterest opponents of Lord Haldane's Territorial Army.

The plain truth is that, with the abdication of government from the regulation of trade and the deliberate extension of the empire, politics became a game played by professional administrators. If government has no responsibility for the fundamentals of the economic order, then so long as the regime is not

challenged, there is nothing for politicians to talk about except politics, and no purpose in the discussion save the retention or the gaining of office. The Victorian and Edwardian reforms were not carried through in a spirit of cynicism; they reflected the general temper of qualified benevolence which required to be gratified; and the ability to gratify it at the right time and in the right measure was the test of political efficiency. To that test Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Gladstone were alike perfectly equal. The only bitter conflicts were over imperial questions, and notably over Mr. Gladstone's mishandling of the Egyptian and Sudanese questions from 1880 to 1885, and of the South African question some years later. As Mr. Gladstone grew older his perorations became longer and more intoxicating to their author. His little Englandism was not a deliberate act of surrender, but the misty product of a suffused optimism which felt that things would work out better without his intervention. Unfortunately, he failed to carry this conviction to the logical point of retirement, and in so failing he presented the Conservative party, which for years had had nothing to conserve, with an imperial passport to office. The advantage secured was transient, for the Liberal imperialists took up the challenge; Lord Rosebery's succession was brief, but his chief lieutenants, Mr. Asquith, Sir Edward Grey, and Mr. Haldane, founded the Liberal League in a timely endeavour to secure their share of the tide of patriotic fervour which Mr. Rudyard Kipling had kindled with heroics and Mr. Cecil Rhodes with even more authentic gold.

The Victorian political system had served the Victorian purpose. It was scrupulously honourable, tolerably efficient, and extremely successful in its aim, which was to hold the ring while the energy and skill of manufacturers and craftsmen and the shrewd judgment of bankers and speculators increased the aggregate of wealth, developed the resources of the new world, and made possible a standard of living far higher than that enjoyed by any previous civilization. The charge which lies against the Victorian politicians is not that (at any rate until 1880) what they did was wrong, but that they did it without thinking, or at least without guarding against the inevitable consequences. Indeed, almost all their reforms came from the

heart and not from the head. They were the product of the conscious and altruistic virtue of the age. After 1880, when the signs of danger should have been easier to see, they were obscured by the Irish and South African troubles, so that there was no time to read them. The Victorians failed to realize that a national economy increasingly based on the export of capital goods was a menace to the peace of the world since the demand was limited and the competition to supply must lead inexorably to a fight for political influence in the territory to be supplied; that foreign competition in the export of manufactures was a menace to national solvency; and that the uneven distribution of wealth was creating a problem which must become acute if at any time the rise in real wages was checked. As it happened the gods were kind to the Victorians, but much less so to their successors, for the development of the Rand led to a rise in world prices in the first decade of this century and for the first time in three generations to a fall in real wages between 1900 and 1914. The result was social unrest. The economic doctrines of the nineteenth century could be acceptable to the many only so long as the many visibly profited. Only a state of general welfare could justify the great private fortunes which were so blatantly visible.

The men of the Victorian age felt responsibility towards their fellow citizens as politicians, not as rich men; the economic system remained above the State, and it was only its effects which could be modified by the State. The system dignified with the name of patriot, and credited with the virtues of prudence, thrift, and foresight, the man who bought cheap, sold dear, and invested his profits first in developing the new world and then in industrializing it. The patriotism and the virtues were alike genuine; the foresight was not.

It is absurd to blame the Victorians either for building railways in the Argentine or for selling textile machinery to Germany, India, and Japan. The perfectionists who criticize them for doing so forget that there is no ordinance from on high which decrees that Englishmen alone should have the benefits of industrialization. If we had refused to build the railways or equip the factories of the under-industrialized, someone else would have done so. Where the Victorians failed was in not

foreseeing the consequences of their perfectly legitimate actions, as the result of which the nations whose railways we built, whose operatives we trained, and whose factories we equipped, are engaged to-day in capturing our trade, ridiculing our philosophies, and confiscating our property (or buying it back on their own terms). Truly, time has dealt hardly in this matter with the Victorians, and in so dealing has dealt for the most part unjustly. What we ought to remember as well as their indifferent taste and their optimistic economies is their courage, their force of character, and their disinterestedness. It takes a man of character to pay low wages and to invest his profits in foreign securities while men at home are working ten hours a day with no security against bad times, ill health, or old age. The amount spent in Victorian England in proportion to the amount saved is the smallest in any recorded epoch. But for the hard and not unattractive reality of their thrift and self-denial we might have suffered shipwreck in the First World War; but for their evident disinterestedness, which commanded the respect of millions in despite of all, we should never have got through the nineteenth century without a political upheaval.

The Victorian age was one of magnificent appearances. Manufacturers from the provinces went through the motions of Roman senators and ennobled brewers played the part of patricians with an assurance that almost conveyed an affront. University students at seventeen, the great Victorians bandied classical quotations with their parents at twenty-one, and took to public life like ducks to water before they were twenty-five. To the eighteenth-century precocity they added the Victorian longevity: Pelion on Ossa. So astounding was their moderation that their energy could not even exhaust itself within man's allotted span—not even in speeches seldom lasting less than three hours or in maintaining families of fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen. So rapid was the pace, so intensive the development, and so immense the force and energy, that, for the great political figures of the epoch, the transition in less than a century from world supremacy to a merely equal place among the great new industrial powers passed unnoticed. The irremovable mass had not even imagined the possibility of the irresistible force.

For the astounding Victorian longevity the sovereign, as in all other matters, determined the fashion. She had known the men of the regency and the Europe of Metternich. She had still nine more years to live when she approved the appointment of Mr. Asquith as Home Secretary. She had watched the collapse of two monarchies and an empire in France; she had seen the rise of Prussia and the foundation of the Second Reich; she had seen the foundation of our Indian Empire, the opening up of Africa, the birth of new self-governing nations in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. As she died another new nation was coming painfully to birth in South Africa.

The seclusion imposed on Queen Victoria, first by her youth, then by her widowhood, and in the closing decades by her age, confined the decisive influence of the Crown to the field of foreign and imperial policy. It was perhaps no coincidence that in this field the Victorian achievement was at least incomparably superior to its record at home. The great Canadian experiment determined early in her reign the future of the British Commonwealth. A generation of heroes saved India from anarchy in 1857, and laid the foundations of seventy-five years of internal peace, the longest period of peace that India has known throughout her history. Australia was peopled and vast territories in South and Central Africa were brought under British rule and Christian influence. Cromer restored prosperity to Egypt after nearly two thousand years of misgovernment. If there was a debit side to our account in these great undertakings it was in the development of an educational system based on the universal validity of our contemporary prejudices. The results have already been seen in India and are at issue to-day in Africa.

Save for one perhaps unnecessary adventure in the Crimea, we lived in peace with our neighbours, and, on occasion, enabled others to do so; but a long series of frontier wars and punitive expeditions preserved the masculine traditions of the eighteenth century in the small class which still lived outside the orbit of trade. The great soldiers of the century were men of force and personality, not products of professional routine. Nicholson, Havelock, Colin Campbell, Gordon, Wolseley, Roberts, and Kitchener: these men were leaders, not paid

officials; students of war and of history, with the accompanying aptitude for all the tasks of government which no great soldier from the days of Caesar has ever lacked. Kitchener was the least talented as a soldier of any of these great men, but he was the only man in Europe who foresaw, in August 1914, the nature, extent, and duration of the struggle, who determined immediately to return to Marlborough's policy of effective military intervention on the Continent, and in so foreseeing and so determining decided the issue of the war.

It was in the world of religion and politics that the lack of integration in nineteenth-century England was most marked. The first of the great radical orators, John Bright, who perorated so magnificently about the Angel of Death in the Crimea, was an opponent of the Factory Acts at home. The inspirer of young England, the supporter of the Protestant Establishment, and of the popular monarchy was a Jewish politician. Gladstone of the golden voice and the magnificent presence, whose one look could electrify, was never the master of his own colleagues, was slow in decision and unreliable in method, and with no sense of logic or consistency. The lifelong champion of peace, he watched the rise of Prussian militarism without a qualm, and though devoted to the Establishment, he stands out in history as the founder of secular education. Neither he nor his rival and enemy Disraeli appreciated one-half as clearly as the queen the implications of the liberal sentiments with which they decorated their perorations. With every gesture of austere wisdom, but with virtually no understanding of the issues involved, they raced each other down the slope which was leading to the impossible experiment of an unlimited democracy operating an unwritten constitution. Even Robert Lowe's terse warning that we must educate our masters accompanied proposals ludicrously inadequate to the task, even if the remedy had met the needs of the case. But of course it did not.

The people needed not more books but more leadership and they did not get it. Three manifest dangers threatened as the century drew to its close. The hold of the traditional Protestant faith and of the traditional Christian morality had been shaken by the spread of scientific materialism and the rising tide of

secularism. Our economic supremacy was threatened by the flood of competitive exports, and our political position by the rising tide of aggressive and militaristic nationalism. Against these three dangers our society needed to be warned, energized, and armed, but the leaders of neither of the great parties were prepared to lead.

The period from the end of the hungry forties to the queen's death had been interspersed with a regular sequence of short but acute depressions, which were met by Liberals and Tories alike in a spirit of solid optimism, although unemployment reached 11.4 per cent in 1879 and nearly 10 per cent in the longer crisis of 1884-87, and rose again to 7.5 per cent in 1893. As a consequence, during the unemployment riots of 1885, the Social Democratic Federation and other Socialist bodies first began to attract a popular following, with results which led to the famous dock strike of 1889 and the creation of the Independent Labour party in 1892. Even to this radical challenge the statesmen of the late Victorian era offered no constructive reply. They merely trusted to Darwin's new gospel of evolution to turn the force of Socialism into some creed less disturbing to their peace of mind.

The same atmosphere of unreality hangs over much of the Victorian literature. Charles Dickens, the champion of the poor and the lyrical, if not hysterical, defender of the domestic virtues, presented a different economic morality to his publishers and a different virtue to his family. The great liberal poets and philosophers lived assured lives mainly on unearned incomes and made not the slightest contribution to the greatest happiness of the greatest number. While Dickens over-acted the part of the simple family man, Thackeray ranted as the man of the world, exposing property skeletons in cupboards conveniently situated in the full glare of the footlights. Meanwhile Carlyle preached the virtues of silence in forty immense volumes. These were famous men. But were they great? It is, perhaps, an idle question. Certainly they had the Victorian energy, the capacity for an indefinite extension of activity. They painted on large canvases. If they were not writing and speaking about life as it is, they were at any rate not doing so about life as it ought to be. If theirs was not statesmanship, it was more than

politics; if it was not literature, it was more than journalism; if it was not history, it was more than propaganda. It is much too easy for us who live in an age of crises which have laid bare, for even clever men to see, the weakness of the foundations of our own society to criticize the Victorian achievement.

The characteristic Victorian writers and historians (to name such uncharacteristic exceptions as Disraeli, the Brontës, Samuel Butler, and Oscar Wilde is to prove the point) wrote and preached under the influence of the theories of the enlightenment and the newer doctrines of Darwin and Huxley. This, in some part, explains their attitude to poverty, sex, crime, and Conservatism. Since men were naturally good and society was free and fluid, and since it was a scientific fact that progress had accompanied reform, society must therefore be good, and the manifest evils of poverty and immorality and political obscurantism must be the responsibility not of society but of the individuals concerned. And they must find their Nemesis in the working out of natural laws. The purpose of Victorian Liberalism (which spread to both political parties) was to allow free play to man's natural (and naturally superb) intelligence. The object of the Victorian Poor Law was not to relieve poverty but to emphasize it in all its stark reality. The purpose of Victorian Puritanism was not to punish excess or to suppress sex. Its purpose was to reflect and harmonize life with an order of nature in which self-indulgence was as unnatural as suicide. Here again Victorian energy and character were matched with fortune. The Victorian economic system could subsidize early marriages and maintain large families. Victorian rigidity never mounted or descended in the social scale. It remained, like its age, essentially middle class; but within its limits, and they were wide, it was more of a reality than cynics pretend. The swift descent into the comparative licence of our own day is due in part to the collapse of Victorian economics and the revolt from Victorian Liberalism; more largely, to other equally natural causes.

The great Victorians sprang from stocks long denied a theatre for the display of their abilities, which, as the result of the industrial revolution, found the greatest opportunities suddenly open to them. Seen from this angle Victorian energy and

character is as much a physiological phenomenon as anything else, and the slackening of tension and the weakening of fibre visible in the third and fourth generations was a natural event. In so far as a society depends not on institutions but on organizations, not on agriculture and industry but on trade, not on the framework of natural and nation-wide incentives but on the character and virtue of a small class of its citizens, there can be no insurance against the operation of such natural events and no immediate mitigation of their consequences.

This fact was as obvious to the later Victorians as to ourselves. Indeed, some part of their preoccupation with questions of morality and the social order was due to a subconscious realization of the fact that between the prosperity which they were enjoying and the ruin of their world nothing stood but themselves. The traditional phrase 'safe as the Bank of England' expressed a hope rather than a certainty. The Bank of England, like any other institution made by men, rests on the character of those who direct it. Every Victorian son who got into debt, every Victorian daughter who ran off with the groom, disclosed to view for an anxious and disagreeable moment the skeleton in the national cupboard, the growing doubt as to whether the foundations of social morality and individual integrity were secure.

Samuel Smiles extolling the virtues of self-help and General Booth preaching the virtues of self-denial; Charles Dickens dashing the seducer Steerforth on the rocks and middle-class Liberalism throwing Parnell and Dilke to the wolves; Matthew Arnold rebuking the Philistines and Carlyle inveighing against the sentimentalists—each and all of them betrayed, alike in their protestation of virtue and their denunciation of vice, a conscious uneasiness. The same uneasiness is reflected in the belated development of interest in social reform in the last third of the century. It was characteristic of the reliance of the age on character rather than on intellectual integrity that the challenge of Darwin and Huxley to orthodox Protestant doctrine was met by a rekindling of the interest of the churches in social problems rather than by a restatement of doctrine, still less by a reasoned defence of their beliefs. Certainly the attack was strong and appeared well grounded, but, as a modern

writer has observed, when you throw dogmas out of the window congregations do not flock in at the doors. It was no coincidence that the decades which saw the first weakening in the appeal of the Protestant churches saw also the first beginnings of the Roman Catholic revival. It was from Rome, not from Canterbury, that the first restatement of Christian social teaching in the light of modern capitalist society was to come in the famous encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in May 1891.

Unfortunately, the voice of the Vatican had no sounding-board in Victorian England, and Maurice, Kingsley, and the Christian Socialists provided an inadequate substitute. There was no national leader to define for English ears the problems of the new age. The only contribution of English Liberalism to the world debate then beginning had been to offer an asylum to Karl Marx. Now, as the century drew to its close, it was clear to all that the century had bred extremes of poverty and wealth; that the political institutions whose development had been inspired by the doctrine of the rights of man had not unseated money from her throne; and that the spread of liberal ideas over Europe had produced not the brotherhood of man but an aggressive and militant nationalism. This sinister conjunction, instead of awakening the political mind of England to re-examine, in the light of new knowledge and painful experience, the economics of Adam Smith and the philosophy of political liberalism, had the paradoxical result of rallying Liberals and Conservatives alike to their defence against the new menace of Marxianism and its English drawing-room version, Fabian Socialism. But their armoury was empty. So long as everything was going on all right, so long as we could just trade where we liked and vote how we liked and grow richer and richer in the process, we could do without a government well enough, and our governing class could avoid the odium of governing while retaining the privileges of appearing to do so. But when the dream of progress was over England found herself, as she remains to-day, at the mercy of speculators of whom not the least evil are those who speculate not with other people's money but with other people's minds. In such circumstances we had to pay not only for our political but for our intellectual laxity, for the fact that the doctrine of free

money, involving, as it did, the gravest assaults on the economic freedom of the moneyless, committed property to the support of the whole armoury of intellectual as well as of political Liberalism. Free Trade dared to tolerate no closed ethical system. Though many of its exponents were religious men, Free Trade was, by the very nature of its being, committed to the free expression of every opinion, however hostile to the traditional authority, whether of government, of religion, or of morality. The frantic national effort to 'keep things going,' to produce an artificial expansion to bolster up an artificial system, reflected in the sphere of politics the same subconscious uneasiness that we have already noted elsewhere. The scramble for gold and markets became more than a little sordid and dangerously competitive; but, at the eleventh hour, the gold discoveries in South Africa pumped new life into the economic system and the South African War stiffened the national pride by its disasters. By describing the black man's gold as the white man's burden, English politicians even contrived to impart a moral tone to the unravelling of the strange tangle of rascality on the Rand.

There were dark clouds on the horizon as the century closed. The great figures were passing. Mr. Gladstone was dead. The queen was dying. Lord Salisbury was to die in 1902. The men who were to lead England in the new age were untried, and the new policies which the times so urgently demanded were as yet undisclosed. The need to protect our trade, to rebuild our fleet, to abandon, perhaps, our long-standing policy of splendid isolation, and to inaugurate policies of social reform which would offer an effective and attractive alternative to the new gospel of Socialism—these needs were present to most men's minds at the start of the twentieth century. There was no lack of ideas but there had been a lack of preparation for their reception. There was a lack of vigour and a loss of faith in our mission as a world power. There was a deep anxiety over the poverty of our military achievement in South Africa.

The politics of the first decade of the present century show clearly that men understood well enough that politics were entering a new phase and that competitive imperialism threatened to end the long century of peace. What remained

hidden was the dangerously volatile temper of the new secularist age. Deceptive speculation about evolution and progress, speculation only allegedly based on scientific discovery, false materialistic philosophies only allegedly derived from the lessons of history, above all, perhaps, the new secularism challenging the Christian view of man's nature and duty and proclaiming man the potential author of his own salvation—these were the solvents which were to unloose forces which the new century would find it impossible to control.

CHAPTER NINE

PRELUDE TO CATASTROPHE

WITH A GENEROUS peace in South Africa and the coronation of Edward VII, the nineteenth century passed into history. There was great optimism on the surface. We were still the greatest world power and the world was still at peace. But the appearances did not deceive the leaders of either of the political parties, and as a consequence both were deeply divided. The Conservatives, under Arthur Balfour, were united in foreign policy but split wide open on domestic issues by the demand of Joseph Chamberlain and his followers for a protectionist policy. The Liberal party, firmly united on Free Trade and ready to pay the price in terms of social reform, had been divided on foreign policy even before the South African War. The so-called Little Englanders, of whom Mr. Lloyd George was already the most notorious, were sentimentally opposed to imperialistic adventures as such, but behind the sentiment was the fear that imperialism was entering on a dangerously competitive phase and that the totality of our power and dominion could only doubtfully be preserved, and could certainly not be extended, except at the price of war.

Party divisions are always fatal to the party in office, while they not infrequently, if illogically, broaden the appeal to the electorate of the party out of office. So it was between 1902 and 1906. In 1903 Joseph Chamberlain resigned to lead the Tariff Reform campaign, to be followed later by other ministers who, as free traders, resigned as a protest against Mr. Balfour's equivocal attitude to the new policy.

Chamberlain was unquestionably right on two points of his diagnosis. The protection of agriculture was necessary alike on grounds of social justice and of political and military expediency. The staple crops and foods could not be produced

in England on terms to compete with the new world, except on the basis of wages which were shamefully low. Even then most farming was at a loss. This was politically undesirable, as it led to a complete lack of balance between town and country; it was militarily dangerous, because in the event of war it would strain our sea communications and thus weaken our fighting strength. We should inevitably find ourselves, in the event of war with a first-class naval power, in the position of Philip II in the sixteenth century, when the Spanish economy depended on keeping intact Spain's communications with the Americas and also with Holland, a task which fortunately for England, but fatally for Spain, deprived Philip II of the power of offensive action at sea and left the strategic initiative to Elizabeth. Chamberlain's case for the protection of the home market in manufactured goods was less clear and was spoilt by being represented by enthusiasts as a panacea for high wages and boundless prosperity. This it could never be to a country as dependent on export trade and imported food as England was, even in 1903. It must always be the sole condition of our survival that we can manufacture goods for export at competitive prices. A protective tariff, wisely and selectively applied, need not make this task impossible, but it cannot make it easier, and, if injudiciously applied, may easily make it much more difficult.

The problem that presented itself to both political parties was that real wages, for the first time for two generations, were falling and looked like falling further, yet the keenness of competition in the export market, which was a luxurious extra to Germany and Japan but a matter of life and death to us, made it impossible to raise the price of our manufactures. The Liberal solution, described as social reform, was, in effect, the subsidization of wages by higher taxation falling on investment income and on capital (in the form of death duties). For this policy Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman and Mr. Asquith, who succeeded to the premiership in 1908, received an overwhelming mandate at the 1906 election. There was to be no protection of British agriculture for a quarter of a century. Instead, at the eleventh hour the Free Trade system was to pay a dividend. Old age pensions were granted, subsidies to wages under the delusive name of social insurance became part of our

economic system, hours were shortened, trade unions were strengthened, and the public appetite for money was sedulously aroused. Only when they touched the lives and consciousness of the classes neither engaged in trade nor asking favours from tradesmen did the pre-war Liberal Governments come near shipwreck. The House of Lords refused to pass Mr. Lloyd George's budget. The army refused to fight Ulster. The Church in Wales was not to be bought out of the Establishment by the promises of endowment. The doctors only grudgingly consented to operate the health insurance scheme.

The intransigent attitude of the landlords, the soldiers, the professional classes, and the Establishment to the main legislative proposals of the Liberal Government, offered a curious and ominous parallel to the situation after the Restoration of Charles II, when politics ceased to be a conflict of genuine principles dividing society vertically, with all classes represented on both sides, and became instead a conflict between classes, whose divisions were determined by self-interest rather than by their judgment of the common good. The merchant bankers and the shipping interests, anxious about Free Trade, found themselves allied with the popular party in support of a government which kept its majority together by fighting the battle of Welsh nonconformity and Irish Home Rule, and which promised to the proletariat in England things even more tangible. Against the Liberal Government were the squirearchy, the country towns, and the professional classes, concerned immediately for the Establishment, the security of capital, the prosperity of agriculture, and the rights of racial minorities, but all of them beginning to be disquieted by what, in the idiom of to-day, would be called the first tentative steps towards the welfare state.

'It is a hard thing,' Mr. Lloyd George had said at Limehouse, 'that the poor man should have to fight his way to the tomb through the brambles and thorns of poverty. I am going to cut a new path for him, a longer and an easier one, through fields of waving corn.' It is difficult now to imagine either the enthusiasm or the hatred which this eloquent but empty rhetoric aroused in 1911. It is certain that the divided opinion corresponded to no economic division. What the new policies

promised above all was an easement of conscience to a middle class still wealthy, still relatively lightly taxed, and still politically predominant. The working classes as such were most certainly not predominantly Liberal; unorganized Labour in the nineteenth century had been traditionally Tory and organized Labour was already turning to the new Labour party. The backbone of the Liberal party were the Nonconformists, the talking classes, and those big business interests whose prosperity depended, or appeared then to depend, on Free Trade. The opposition to Mr. Lloyd George's campaign was equally heterogeneous, and was certainly not inspired primarily by selfishness. On the contrary, there was, in the first decade of this century, a very general uneasiness at the maldistribution of incomes. The bitterness had been aroused not by the principle of compulsory insurance but at the offer of something for nothing (or, more exactly, ninepence for fourpence), which struck a new and, to many, an unwelcome note in English politics. Were forces being unloosed which it would be impossible to control? It was the inherent objection to the policy, and, as some would argue, its inherent evil, that it contained within it no self-regulating principle. If it was ethical to give to millions of voters, in exchange for fourpence, ninepence, then why not a shilling or even one and sixpence? A vista of vicarious benevolence was opened up. It was for argument whether its appeal was to the softest hearts or the softest heads. Certainly it marked the turning point, which was to prove the point of no return, for nonconformity. Already the hatred alike of Rome and the Establishment had led the Nonconformists to support the secularization of education. Now, abandoning the hard and simple faith of their ancestors in the simple Word of God as the sole necessary instrument of a salvation to be reached only on the other side of the grave, they set out to build a subsidized paradise on earth, to which all men should be persuaded by the soft compulsions of political manipulation. The motive, so we were assured, was unimpeachable. It was the general betterment of mankind without tears, but the path of the new redeemer by-passed Calvary. It led to No. 10 Downing Street.

It was between 1906 and 1914, when the dangerous traverse

from the negative to the positive state began, that the Conservative party first became stigmatized as the party of reaction. It was inevitable that the new subsidized social insurances should be opposed by His Majesty's opposition, but it so happened that the opposition were at the same time engaged in fighting the disestablishment of the Welsh Church and the coercion of Ulster, in pressing unanimously for a larger navy and less unanimously for compulsory military service and in defending the absolute veto of the House of Lords over new legislation. In so doing the Conservative party, whether they were acting wisely or no, were acting with quixotic disinterestedness. No causes could have been less popular than the preservation of the Welsh Establishment or conscription, while the claim of the House of Lords to retain its full and undefined powers, while possibly justified constitutionally, could not possibly be expected to be popular in the country. But if the Conservatives were disinterested they were imprudent. The Liberals were in office, and meant to remain there, and had no hesitation in representing the Conservative opposition as an uneasy coalition of selfish interests, of landlords objecting to taxes on land, of peers objecting to the curtailment of their privileges, of Ulstermen seeking to dominate the Irish Catholic majority with the help of English votes, and of English churchmen seeking to retain Welsh endowments and Welsh tithes. The one bond which united these differently selfish interests, so the story ran, was the common disinclination shown by the rejection of Mr. Lloyd George's famous budget, to see any transfer of wealth from their own pockets to those of the toiling masses.

It was a sinister picture and Mr. Asquith's Liberal administration was fully capable of conveying its significance to an electorate not a quarter the size of our own but still capable of being generously misled. The task was made easier by the lack of leadership among the Conservatives, who provided the most skilful parliamentary opposition known in this century but made no effort to put either a policy or a programme before the country. The Conservative party had suffered two crushing blows—the breakdown in health of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and the buoyant good health of Mr. Arthur Balfour, the only

party leader in English political history, so far, to lead his party to defeat at three successive general elections. The Conservative leader was supremely intelligent, had great courage, and a manifest integrity, but he could not make up his mind; when his party was disinterested he was uninterested; when it was interested, he was unobservant. Joseph Chamberlain, in helpless retirement at Highbury from 1906 until his death in 1910, must have watched the successive defeats of the Conservative party with bitter regrets, for, although older in age than Balfour, he was the first of the great party leaders to make a regular practice of speaking directly to the public about public affairs. His leading opponent on the platform had been Mr. Asquith, unequalled then or later in the arts of debate, and Mr. Asquith had been ably seconded by an ardent young free trader who had left the Tory party despairing of that Tory democracy which his father had aspired to lead. Now, in 1911, Mr. Winston Churchill was an equally outstanding second to Mr. Lloyd George in the championship of the new social reforms. To such challenging figures the Conservative party could only reply with the brilliant but irresponsible Mr. F. E. Smith, while in the matter of Ireland, Conservatives entrusted not only their political allegiance but their national conscience to Sir Edward Carson, at whose feet not only they but Eamon de Valera, Benito Mussolini, and Adolf Hitler were to learn the complete grammar of anarchy. Sir Edward Carson had discovered in the private army the one unanswerable reply to democratic majority rule.

This was a supremely dangerous discovery and with it tempers rose. A great deal of bitterness against the Liberal administration in general, and Mr. Lloyd George in particular, was due to the realization by the better informed on both sides that the times were too dangerous for deadly domestic quarrels. For the same reason the government treated with the utmost severity the threat of armed resistance from Ulster. The feeling in Liberal circles was that the Conservatives, at least, should have known better. Recording the first beginnings of controversies yet unresolved and still being pursued in circumstances at least as dangerous as those which were manifest in 1911, the historian can only reflect on the extraordinary failure of all

parties, then as yesterday and to-day, to realize the dangers which threatened from abroad or to convey the reality of those dangers to the people. Alike in Europe and Asia revolutionary changes had taken place since the new century began and every one of those changes had brought us nearer by 1911 to the end of the first century of comparative peace and uninterrupted progress which the world had known for nearly two thousand years.

Europe at the opening of the present century was still in appearance the Europe of the *ancien régime*. Four great empires, Germany,¹ Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Turkey, dominated continental Europe east of the Rhine. Three great empires, Great Britain, Russia, and China, dominated Asia. The appearance of a European order was only preserved by immense forces of tradition and sentiment and by the fear universally felt by elder statesmen of all countries that even the most modest attempts at repair or readjustment would bring the whole structure to ruin.

The accepted keystones of British foreign policy in the nineteenth century had been three: naval supremacy, the preservation of a balance of power on the Continent, and a rigid abstinence from continental commitments.² This meant in practice, by the end of the century, the two-power naval standard and the concentration of our diplomatic efforts on the prevention of disputes between the great powers and the localization of such disputes if they broke out into hostilities. This policy had one overwhelming advantage: it brought us security and it made us no enemies. It had one disadvantage which in certain circumstances might also be overwhelming: it brought us no friends. We had found proof of both these facts during the South African War.

¹ Or, more correctly, the German Empire.

² It was the policy laid down by Canning and more fully defined by Clarendon, as summarized by Mr. Gladstone, in words the wisdom of which can be well appreciated to-day: 'England should keep entire in her own hands the means of estimating her own obligations upon the various states of facts as they arise. . . . She should not foreclose or narrow her own liberty of choice by declarations made to the powers in their real or supposed interests, of which they would claim to be at least joint interpreters. . . . It is dangerous for her to assume alone an advanced and therefore an isolated position in regard to European controversies.'

Our Achilles heel was India. We feared for our communications with India and we feared for our north-west frontier. We wanted neither a first-class naval power in the Mediterranean, nor the incursion of a great land power into the Middle East. And because of the immense length and fundamental insecurity of our sea communications with our empire, we had then as now to avoid at all costs such a direct challenge to our naval supremacy as would be implied by the presence of a first-class naval power in possession of the Channel ports or controlling the Pacific.

These considerations had become very present to English statesmen as they surveyed the world of 1901. Our military prestige, never very high on the Continent despite the still persisting fame of Marlborough and Wellington among the great captains, was tarnished by the heroic resistance of the Boer republics and by our own tale of blunders in the field. Of the four continental empires, three were manifestly in process of dissolution and their dissolution must open the road from Europe to Asia. It was a commonplace that the Austrian Empire would not survive the death of the legendary figure of the Emperor Francis Joseph, himself the last direct personal link with the Europe of Metternich, his throne the last secular constitutional link with the Europe of the Middle Ages. On the Bosphorus sat 'Abdul the Damned on his accursed throne,' equally incapable of either government or misgovernment, while the last of the czars, threatened in the East and detested in his own country, still casting a shifty but predatory eye on the Balkans and Constantinople, completed an unusually troubled picture. In the Pacific the emergence of Japan as a great naval power threatened a dramatic and, in the long run, an unfavourable change in the balance of forces in Asia.

British foreign policy took a much more realistic view of these facts than it would be likely to do to-day. In those days there were still close, even intimate, personal relationships between the ruling families and classes of Europe; the professional diplomats who formed, as they should in the interests of security as well as peace, almost an international society of their own, had greater power and authority; finally, there was no need to

keep tens of millions of people continuously informed on foreign policy. To-day, an alliance or working arrangement or even diplomatic support is believed to require to have public opinion behind it if it is to be effective. A story has therefore to be told, and is inevitably embroidered in the telling. The weakness of our enemies and the virtues of our friends become magnified in the process, until the public may well have a completely false picture of the real balance of forces or even of the real sentiments of the peoples involved. Round such a false picture may be built up so great a force of sentiment, passion, or idealism that a country may find itself irrevocably committed to a course of action which its leaders know from later experience or fuller information to be dangerous or even downright impracticable. The statesmen of 1901 were not confronted with these terrible risks. They could work in the sole interests of national security with a free hand, provided only that they had energy and courage. The men who guided British foreign policy from 1901 to 1914 had both.

There were three choices open to this country at the beginning of the present century. We could maintain our naval strength and our policy of isolation. We could seek and perhaps reach an understanding with Germany. We could seek and perhaps reach an understanding with France. The protagonist of the first policy was Lord Salisbury; of the second, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain; of the third, when the second failed, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and, later, Lord Lansdowne. In a static world the first was unquestionably the best policy, but was it a static world? Even Lord Salisbury was forced to doubt it. The ambitions of Germany and Russia both looked eastward to the Dardanelles and beyond. Potentially, both were residuary legatees of the Austro-Hungarian Empire when it broke up, and its impending dissolution was the accepted premiss of European diplomacy. An agreement with Germany in 1899, as in 1920, had much to recommend it. Germany was threatening a challenge to our naval supremacy: she was already competing actively with us for the world's export trade. She was the most formidable military power in the world. She had a rising population and a long tradition of forceful and forward diplomacy. She was incomparably the most dangerous

potential enemy, and should she succeed in reaching the Dardanelles, she would be a far more formidable menace to our Indian Empire and our carrying trade than would be Russia in a similar situation. There were not in 1899, any more than there were in 1920 or later (until the arrival of Herr Hitler on the scene), any party-political or popular objections to an understanding with Germany. Quite to the contrary. It was to Germany that social reformers and educationalists were beginning to look with mistaken zeal for inspiring examples in the field of state-directed reforms. Russia on the other hand, even to our mildly liberal England of 1901, presented a distasteful picture. But if the advantages of an agreement with Germany were many, the disadvantages of trying to make an agreement with Germans had already made themselves felt.

The negotiations tentatively attempted by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain in 1899 had been carried on in an atmosphere of double-dealing with more than a suspicion of a fundamental insincerity of purpose. Quite obviously Germany wished to ensure against an encircling coalition against her, but was she at any time steadfastly and honestly prepared to abandon her century-old tradition of dynamism in foreign policy? And was not her dislike of Great Britain too deeply rooted in a fundamental difference of outlook to be bridged by diplomacy?

There was nothing new in the Germany of 1900. German philosophy had been preaching the fulfilment of man through the State, the essentially experimental nature of the historical process, progress as a function of the conflict of opposites, and the worship of the State as 'the manifestation of the divine on earth' ever since the days of Hegel. Indeed Hegel explicitly defines the State as 'that form of reality in which the individual enjoys his freedom provided he recognizes, believes in, and wills what is common to the whole.' It was he who gave to posterity the naked and pregnant maxim that the will of the State is morality. In other words, Germany at the end of last century was as essentially unreliable, as essentially dangerous, and as essentially hostile as the Germany of yesterday. Only on the surface was her diplomacy 'correct' and her aims those of the rest of the world—peace, order, and progress in and through the comity of nations. And the matter does not rest

there. It was already the tragedy of Anglo-German relations even at the beginning of the century that we had to rely—if an agreement was to be reached—on the weakest, not the strongest, elements in Germany, on the aristocracy, the Jewish millionaires, and the social democrats, the first two uneasy bedfellows, implacably opposed to the third. Sheltered behind the façade of an aristocracy half *ancien régime* and half *arriviste*, and contemptuously indifferent to the challenge of democracy, Prussianism forty years ago, as before and since, was master.

Scarcely more attractive to Edwardian eyes was the picture presented by France. Here was a bourgeois republic whose ideals and practices were only theoretically pleasing to the England of 1901. We had fought France for centuries: we had stood by and watched her defeat by Germany in 1870 with only a polite murmur of sympathy. We had lately had a bitter moment of tension over conflicting territorial ambitions in Africa. Worse still, the Third Republic, to respectable English eyes, was felt 'to be deficient in soundness, stability, and repute.'¹ The succession of weak ministries, the violence of faction, and the scarcely intermittent financial scandals had led France more than once since the horrors of the Commune to the verge of civil war. The *affaire Dreyfus*, not yet concluded, seemed but the climax to a long series of sordid scandals, which revealed a France deeply divided and without a government which either received or deserved the loyal support of its citizens. Nor was the fact that it was in France in 1899, in the person of M. Millerand, that the first Socialist entered a European Cabinet, any more reassuring to the liberalism of Lord Rosebery and Mr. Asquith than to the conservatism of Lord Salisbury and Mr. Arthur Balfour. Finally, the falling French birth-rate was far more disquieting to the respectable in those prolific days than it would be to-day. We were still moralists and realists, and the falling population of France threatened to disturb the military balance on the Continent, while affronting the consciences of our more old-fashioned citizens.

On the other hand, there were signs by 1901, that the Third Republic was recovering both its political and its social cohesion.

¹ H. A. L. Fisher, *A History of Europe*, vol. iii. (Eyre & Spottiswoode: revised edition, 1938).

It was sick but not dead. Whatever else it had lost, it had preserved its parliamentary institutions, then just as much as now an object of veneration to the British public of all political creeds.

Russia presented a picture easier for the present generation to recognize. *Plus ça change*. . . . Her immense resources, her remoteness, the almost oriental indifference which her diplomacy affected towards the mundane but urgent affairs of the commercial west, her legendary cruelty suffused with an equally legendary religiosity, the knowledge of her vast armies and the doubts as to their efficiency or mobility—the outlines of the picture have not notably altered in forty years. Nevertheless, the ruling family and the small cosmopolitan aristocracy which in 1901 surrounded the court and controlled Russian diplomacy provided a connecting link which to-day does not exist. The Russian Government and Foreign Office, however oriental at home, talked the common language of European politics, employed Europeans in its diplomatic service, and observed its outward formalities with scrupulous correctness.

What of the British Foreign Office at the beginning of the present century? We are much too apt to imagine that the years before 1914 were days of over-confident tranquillity. No such feeling prevailed in Downing Street in 1901. At the end of the Boer War England was isolated and very much afraid of her isolation. Even Russia, then as to-day no ardent champion of the rights of small nationalities, had joined in the outcry against our attack on the Boer Republics, while German hostility was vocal almost to the point of war. Had she had a fleet she would have delivered the ultimatum which, as it was, remained in draft. There was, moreover, the German naval programme, associated for all time with the name of Tirpitz, first heard of in Europe in 1898. There was also the rising strength of Japan, which under the long rule of the Mikado Mutzu Hito rose from her feudal and agricultural backwater to the status of a great naval, military, and industrial power, in less than fifty years.

In these threatening circumstances necessity, not idealism, determined our policy from 1900 to 1914. Our first step was an alliance with Japan, concluded by Mr. Arthur Balfour in

1902. This was our reply to the German naval expansion, and a prime cause of the victory of the Allies in 1918. The next step was to settle the French colonial claims, involving as a consequence the recognition by us of French rights in Morocco and the recognition by France of our position in Egypt and the Sudan. At the same time, the outstanding differences of the two countries in Newfoundland, Madagascar, and the New Hebrides were finally settled. The chief architects of this settlement were M. Paul Delcasse and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, but it was the weakness of Russia and the strength of Japan, now fortified by the British alliance, which turned the continental agreement into a firm and enduring bond for common action against Germany.

We followed sound strategical principles in those crucial years. Four points are particularly worth noting. Firstly, we moved quickly and secretly, and in that way we seized and retained the initiative. Secondly, before we negotiated with France we protected our flank. Once secure in the Pacific, we came to France in an unchallengeable position as masters of the North Sea and the Mediterranean. Thirdly, we realized that, in diplomacy as in war, if you want something you must give something. The passive defensive is the road to ruin. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain did not consider it worth while to negotiate an agreement with France (as we had to do so often between the wars both with France and Italy) on the basis that our rights were recognized while hers were not. The weakness of France during the Russo-Japanese War might quite possibly have induced France to accept such an agreement, but agreements not based on mutual self-interest will not be kept. Most important of all, we realized that agreements for the maintenance of the *status quo* automatically range behind them the old and tired and alienate the young and active minds. To base a foreign policy on the doctrine that every change in the *status quo* is a step on the road to perdition is to ensure your ultimate isolation. An atmosphere of change is essential to the preservation of peace.

The events which followed almost immediately on the Japanese alliance and the opening of negotiations with France were wholly unexpected. We were prepared for them because we

had seized the diplomatic initiative so as to be prepared for any eventuality. The Japanese victory over Russia was certainly the least probable of any; yet it happened, and it deprived France of her reinsurance against Germany. In 1905, after the collapse of the imperial armies in the field, Russia experienced a revolutionary convulsion, and Count Schlieffen, chief of the German staff, at once proposed that Germany should force a war on France. Now, he argued, was the time for testing and possibly breaking the new Franco-British *entente*. The diplomatic offensive opened when the Kaiser went to Tangier. Shortly afterwards the French were forced, under the threat of war, to accept the resignation of Delcasse and the summoning of a conference at Algeciras. But that was not, as intended, the end of the *entente*. It was the beginning of the unwritten Anglo-French alliance which was to destroy imperial Germany. Lord Lansdowne, the titular negotiator of the official *entente*, had been succeeded by Sir Edward Grey, who gave the fullest diplomatic support to the French claims at the Algeciras Conference. The result was a very Pyrrhic victory for German diplomacy. Her right to be consulted about North Africa was theoretically recognized but practically rejected.

Germany had, indeed, appeared at Algeciras in 1906 in the role so often adopted at more recent conferences by this country. What Germany objected to had already been done and could only be undone by war. Historical forces were ranged against her and all she could do was to put her signature to an agreement embodying the substance of the *fait accompli*. She was not ready for war against England, nor had the diplomatic background been prepared. No effective forces were marshalled in her support. All she was able to secure was a secret clause recognizing certain rights for her Italian ally to a sphere of influence south-east of Egypt (a clause which we forgot twenty-five years later) and the creation of an international zone at Tangier. Had Great Britain wavered in her support of France, Germany would have put the famous Schlieffen plan into operation, France would have been defeated, and Germany installed in the Channel ports. The situation of midsummer 1940 would have developed in the spring of 1906. This sinister development had not been frustrated by speeches, but by the

deeds of the preceding four years. The determining factor was that England, Japan, and France represented an unassailable naval coalition whose ultimate victory, neither Italy nor Austria being then naval powers, would have been inevitable.

The lesson was learnt by both sides. Germany pressed ahead with her naval expansion. The War Office, authorized by Mr. Asquith, Sir Edward Grey, and Mr. Haldane, initiated secret military conversations between the French and British military staffs. Mr. Haldane proceeded to reorganize and re-equip our regular army and to create the Territorial Army. Swiftly and secretly we prepared to retain, as Germany prepared to recover, the initiative.

Following the Algeciras Conference and the inauguration of staff talks, Sir Edward Grey turned his attention to Russia: seven years, be it noted, before the outbreak of war. This was a discussion not between two European monarchies but between two oriental empires. It turned on their respective spheres of influence in the Middle East. Russia was weakened by defeat in the east and shaken by revolution at home. We could have effected a 'settlement' with her, as we could have with France in 1904, on easy terms—perhaps on no terms at all. Russia was still France's ally: she could not count in the short run on German support. But we gave her instead the lion's share, to the great chagrin of Lord Curzon, who protested that 'Persia, a land famous for the eloquence of her poets and the wisdom of her philosophers,' had been sacrificed to imperialistic aggression. Behind this protest a new force, louder, less literate, and far more fateful for human destinies, was heard for the first time—the force of 'democratic' public opinion claiming to direct foreign policy on 'idealistic' lines.¹

The genesis of the outburst against Sir Edward Grey's Russian agreement was to be found in the historic division of the Liberal party into Whigs and Radicals. The administration included both. The Prime Minister and Mr. Lloyd George represented the old pro-Boer Radical party: Mr. Asquith, Sir

¹ I use quotation marks not out of disrespect for democracy or idealism, which remain the chief secular hopes for the world, but for that type of ill-informed minority opinion which arrogantly assumes the exclusive right to call its practice democratic and its aims noble.

Edward Grey, and Mr. Haldane the Liberal League which, under the leadership of Lord Rosebery, had adopted the national point of view in 1899. The rank and file of the party were divided between the two camps. To the 'left' of the Radicals was the new Labour party, led by Mr. Keir Hardie in a cloth cap and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald in a red tie—Labour was still class-conscious in 1906. The Radicals claimed to have won the election, or at least to have been responsible for the size of the majority (without precedent until the election of 1931), through their Chinese slavery campaign. They were now busy stirring up political and class feeling against the House of Lords. Yet the party, as a whole, was solidly behind the administration which had received as overwhelming a mandate from the electorate as it was possible to imagine. Sir Edward Grey had no difficulty whatever in carrying his Russian policy, which was actively opposed only by a small group of intellectuals with no weight in the country but with a disproportionate influence among the Radicals in the House of Commons. The British democracy expects, and for once it got, resolute leadership. Our national security was preserved not after fatal delays at the eleventh hour but by prudent measures taken before and not after the crisis. Had Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's government given way, as British Governments have repeatedly done since, to the press and platform outcry which greeted the publication of the terms of the agreement, the German-Russian alliance, which had already become a secondary and tentative object of German diplomacy, would have been translated into an accomplished fact, and by 1911 the German armies would have been in Paris and the whole of the Middle East would have been under Russian control.

The views expressed by the opponents of the agreement may have been in accordance with the text-books of academic Liberalism as taught in the schools—but the consequences which inevitably follow the disregard of the realities of power would have been fatal all the same. The intellectual leaders of British advanced opinion have never learnt that, when you appeal to the sword, the sword decides. It is excellent fun for the politicians to range all the peoples of the world against us and meet them with nothing more expressive than a peroration from

Shakespeare, but it is not such good fun for the peoples. 'Come the three corners of the world in arms and we shall shock them.'¹ Nonsense! We won the 1914 war, as we won the 1939 war, only when we had massed and mobilized, by our industry and our diplomacy, superior and well-trained forces. Not a moment earlier, nor by any other means! Victory comes only to the soldier who remembers that every battle can be won, and to the statesman who remembers that every war can be lost. Nor is it difficult for a generation experienced in war to reconcile these maxims. Wars are lost when the politicians present their adversary with the opportunity of achieving his objective without having to fight for it. That is what we should have done had we listened to the 'democratic' outcry against the Anglo-Russian pact of 1907. Germany yesterday, as Russia to-day, was looking eastwards. Her principal objective was the road to the Near East and the Persian Gulf. She would have gained that objective without firing a shot had it not been for the Anglo-Russian pact.

As it was, Germany was nearly encircled. But she did not intend to be. The results of her renewed determination to avoid encirclement were soon apparent in Vienna, where Aehrenthal, the astute and unscrupulous half-oriental Foreign Minister, was quick to realize Germany's position.

The political map of the Balkans had been arranged at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. Like many other achievements of the despised Victorians, the settlement had endured, and but for the golden opportunity for mischief-making which the year 1908 presented to Austria, it might have endured still longer. In that year, however, Turkey was in the throes of a revolutionary upheaval, and Germany so isolated diplomatically that Austria could count on her support.

Bulgaria under the Berlin settlement had become a principality under Turkish sovereignty, while Bosnia and Herzegovina, although still under Turkish suzerainty, were administered by Austria under a mandate from the powers. The object of these curious arrangements had been to relieve the unfortunate peoples of these lands from the burdens of Turkish misrule, without creating a dispute between Russia and Austria as to

¹ *King John*, v. vii.

which should inherit the Turkish sovereignty. The arrangements had worked well. The peoples had prospered under disinterested rule and had been spared the risk of becoming involved in quarrels which could not interest them. They had had thirty years without history and had been happy. In October 1908 their happiness ended and their history began again. Aerenthal announced the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bulgaria proclaimed her independence of the Porte. Aerenthal, with cynical duplicity, had tricked Isvolsky, the Russian ambassador in Vienna. Between them this pair of conspirators had agreed on a double breach of the Treaty of Berlin. Austria was to have the provinces. Russia was to be given access through the Dardanelles to the Mediterranean. Before the plot could be matured, Aerenthal published the news of the Austrian annexations. The plot was infamous; the betrayal unspeakable. It is impossible to doubt that in 1908, as in 1914, the Austrian Foreign Office was ready for, if it did not actually desire, war. But in 1908 Russia, wholly taken aback, was unready. Berlin warned St. Petersburg in unpleasant language that a refusal to accept the *coup d'état* meant war, and Russia gave in. Isvolsky, vain, revengeful, and irresponsible, neither forgave nor forgot. His time was to come: July 1914 found him Russian ambassador in Paris.

Much was to happen before that date, and notably the consolidation of the Turkish Revolution. This was a movement of a type with which the world to-day is painfully acquainted. It was a movement of professional revolutionaries, the first of its kind, and as such an event of the first historical importance. Like other such movements, it was wholly misunderstood by Liberal opinion in Great Britain, which gleefully saw the baroque figures of Enver, Talaat, and Djavid as would-be martyrs in the cause for which Hampden died in the field and Sidney on the scaffold. They had an excuse, no doubt, in the admitted infamies of Abdul Hamid. Any government, the Liberals naïvely supposed, must be an improvement on his. That of course was the feeling not only at the National Liberal Club, but throughout the Turkish Empire; it was precisely on the strength of this feeling that Enver and his friends had calculated. They knew that they had only to raise the banner

of reform to win overwhelming support. That is the technique of all gangsters who aspire to political power. But Enver was the first of his line and therefore a portent of the shape of things to come.

The failure to understand the portent was to cost democracy dear as late as 1944. We understood neither the men nor their methods. How closely the Young Turks, as they called themselves, were in fact allied to the secret revolutionary forces and organization whose activity in continental politics dates back now for at least two centuries, had been disputed. The inquiry is an unprofitable one in any case. We need not indulge in dark speculations about Grand Orient Masonry to understand what matters about this and other later revolutions. They are not the product of secret societies, though they may be actively supported by them. They are the product of the printing press, popular education, irreligion, immorality, and ambition.

In any country long misgoverned education is a dangerous solvent. That is an argument, I hasten to add, against misgovernment, not against education. The most dangerous form this solvent can take is education not based on grammar, logic, and mathematics, but on the popular press and the writings of revolutionary idealists. Revolutionary idealists never themselves make revolutions. They are merely the stuff of which revolutions are made by men like Enver, Talaat, and Djavid. The formal origin of the Turkish Revolution was the Committee of Union and Progress, a secret society, which met first at Geneva, where it was in touch with the Russian revolutionaries, then in Paris, and finally in Salonika. Its members were not oppressed Turkish peasants or workmen, but the intelligentsia of the outlying Turkish seaport towns, mainly doctors and lawyers, with a strong Jewish element, and a number of professional soldiers. Enver was a young officer; Talaat a civil servant in Salonika; Djavid a Jewish financier. These three able and ambitious men were determined to seize the reins of power and they did so. They represented no one but themselves. They had won power by force. They represented neither an oppressed class nor an oppressed nationality. They succeeded not to the representation of a people but to the military rule of a despot's empire. They were, as it happened, men of capacity, but, as

is usual in men of their type, without either experience or principles. They knew neither what they could nor what they ought to do. They proceeded to set up a methodical and centralized tyranny sustained by outrages of the most atrocious character. The effect was epoch-making. These vigorous, undisciplined, and ruthless men succeeded in three years in healing the ageless feuds of the Balkans and uniting all the Christian Balkan peoples in a military league against Turkey.

The Young Turks were the idols of Liberal-minded circles for quite a few months after their real character had become clear to observers at close quarters. Fortunately they never became a focus of political passion like the Spanish revolutionaries of a quarter of a century later. This was because, when they provoked by their misrule a military league against them in the Balkans, English Liberal opinion swung round to the Balkan League, partly because of the adhesion of Greece and partly because the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina had made the British press and public acquainted with the Serbian grievances against Austria.

The Balkan League was the creation, largely, of M. Venizelos, a Cretan politician, himself 'hardened,' as the late H. A. L. Fisher, who knew him well, politely put it, 'in the civil wars of his own island.' Venizelos was, in fact, a formidable and subtle blend of the nationalist gang-leader and the cosmopolitan revolutionary. By far the most sympathetic and attractive of the revolutionaries of our time, he largely contributed to the Greek renaissance. His personal failure was still very far in the future: his greatest days still lay before him. Seizing the moment when Italy was engaged in taking Tripoli from Turkey, he wheeled the forces of the League into action. In a campaign of six weeks the Balkan League practically destroyed all European Turkey outside Constantinople. It was the beginning of the world war.

Already, a year before, there had been a premonitory sign of imposing disaster, when the German Government, irritated by the dispatch of a French military mission to Fez, sent a gunboat to Agadir. Mr. Lloyd George, speaking at the Mansion House, had warned Germany that any attempt at interference in the Mediterranean would mean war, and the

crisis had passed, but every succeeding crisis added to the tension. Early in the following year the British Naval Staff agreed that the French fleet should be concentrated in the Mediterranean, while the British fleet assumed moral if not treaty responsibility for safeguarding the Channel coast of France in the event of war.

It was the Balkan cataclysm which made a European war inevitable because the collapse of the 'sick man of Europe' had created graver problems than it solved. Greece had enlarged her frontiers without arousing the jealousy of either Russia or Austria, but the sudden arrival on the European stage of a greatly enlarged Serbia, whose powerful armies were already in Central Macedonia and threatening to extend westwards to the Adriatic shore, was a different affair. The disruptive force which must inevitably be exercised on the Austro-Hungarian Empire by a powerful Serbia, flushed with conquest and gaining by her access to the sea the status of an important European power, was as evident in St. Petersburg as in Vienna. It followed that the Serbian claims were vigorously pressed by Russia and supported by France, and as vigorously opposed by Austria, supported by Germany. Nor was it unimportant that Bulgaria, the firm friend of Austria (because there was no Bulgarian minority within the Austro-Hungarian Empire and because she owed her successful assertion of independence in 1908 to Austrian connivance), had contributed most to and derived least benefit from the victory of the Balkan League over Turkey. To the vastly increased power of Serbia and her natural friend and ally Greece, there was thus no sufficient counterpoise on which Vienna could rely.

The situation for the Dual Monarchy was difficult enough in any case. The whole structure of this composite state was based on the negation of the philosophy of racialism, then a word to conjure with in progressive circles all over the world. It was the new effervescence of racial patriotism which had carried the Balkan League to victory, and racial patriotism is infectious. It was not only Austria's 6,000,000 Serbs whose desire for independence would be stimulated by the League's victory, but her 8,500,000 Czechs, her 4,000,000 Poles, her 5,000,000 Ruthenes, her 3,000,000 Rumanians, and her

1,500,000 Slovenes as well. With Serbia on the Adriatic, the military as well as the political position of the Dual Monarchy would be fatally imperilled.

The break-up of Austria-Hungary was not a British interest, as British interests were judged in those sober days. It must inevitably shatter the world's peace. It was not, at that date, regarded as axiomatic that it would add to the happiness of the 'liberated' peoples. The debacle of the Young Turks had disillusioned Downing Street as to the inevitability of progress under 'progressive' national leadership, while it had opened their eyes very wide indeed to the difficulties of localizing Balkan quarrels. The fruitful consequence was that London in 1913 saw the last effective employment of the diplomacy of the balance of power which modern history will record. England became in effect the mediator between two equally balanced groups, and imposed on both an honourable compromise. An independent state of Albania was created, under a German prince, to stand between Serbia and the Adriatic sea-board.

The signature of the Treaty of London was perhaps the high-water mark of Britain's diplomatic achievement in our century. We acted with intelligence, force, and disinterest. We had preserved the peace of Europe without forfeiting the goodwill of any of the powers, great or small. Our prestige at that time afforded a striking contrast to our prestige at the end of the Boer War. It was to be a decisive factor in the anxious and dangerous years which lay immediately ahead of us.

The very success of our part in the Balkan disputes of 1912 and 1913 has been held by some to condemn the general trend of our diplomacy in the years preceding 1914. Here, these critics say, is, if not proof, at least a clear indication that so long as England was aloof and in no way committed to either party in a dispute, the fear of her intervention was sufficient to ensure the acceptance of a reasonable settlement. Had we occupied the same position of detachment in July 1914, we could have mediated between Austria and Russia as successfully as we did in the Balkans fifteen months before.

This criticism rests on a complete misunderstanding of the realities of foreign policy.

Peace was preserved in 1913 as a result of Sir Edward Grey's skill, but skill would have availed nothing if the situation of 1913 had originated in the action of any of the great powers. The national passions of the great powers were not aroused; the political future neither of Austria nor of Russia had been staked. Diplomacy can be effective in these circumstances. Once a great power has declared its position and stated its demands, once it is actually involved in a dispute, all that diplomacy can do is to cover up a surrender on one side or the other. Britain ended her isolation not in order to defeat the aims of one power or another, but in order to preserve such an equilibrium in Europe that no great power would press its claims beyond the point where diplomacy could be effective. In this Mr. Balfour, Lord Lansdowne, and Sir Edward Grey were successful, and there is ample evidence that, but for their policy, war would have broken out in 1905, in 1908, and in 1911, as well as in 1913. Nothing moreover is more probable than that, but for the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914, that year also would, thanks to British diplomacy, have come to its close with Europe still at peace.

Nevertheless, the rising temper of the nationalist movements must, in the long run, have led to war in a Europe whose delicate diplomatic machinery had as its linchpin an empire whose very constitution was a negation of national claims and whose continued survival, therefore, could not be counted on in an age aggressively and militarily nationalistic. That can be said with certainty, and to say that is to justify the course of British foreign policy in the first years of the century. While creating the conditions most favourable to the maintenance of peace, as was proved by successive crises safely overcome, we prepared also for war and ensured that our interests, when the challenge of German imperialism was ultimately delivered, should be effectively defended by a coalition long prepared for the purpose.

Must we conclude that there is no substance in the charge that Britain shares, even if in lesser measure, with Austria, Germany, and Russia the responsibility for the war of 1914? That at no time up to August 1914 did any British statesmen and any body of public opinion plan or wish to fight Germany

is quite certain. Whether an agreement with Germany which would have prevented war was at any time possible is a question to which, in the nature of the case, no categorical answer is possible. The 1914 world was in a state of economic transition, albeit far advanced, in which England, France, Germany, and the United States were competing in the sale of manufactured goods to nations not yet highly industrialized, in return for raw materials, but were each increasingly concerned, as the industrialization of the new world and of the East went on, to see that it was achieved with their machinery, supervised by their engineers, and financed by their capital. Each in this way hoped, when the wheel should have come full circle, and the process of industrialization should be completed, to levy tribute in the form of interest on the vast potential resources of these new worlds. This competitive export trade depended for its operation on the existence of a limited number of highly industrialized nations with docile populations and a productive capacity in excess of effective consumers' demand, set over against a group of non-industrialized countries anxious to become industrialized and willing to mortgage their capital assets to foreign lenders for the purpose.

These conditions still existed in 1914, but they could not continue to exist for much longer.

In the new economic competition Germany was the last starter, but the astounding development of her heavy industries, largely occupied in the manufacture of capital goods, was certainly the most vital factor in the economic history of the twenty-five years preceding the war. In 1885-89 Great Britain was producing on an average 7,600,000 tons of pig-iron and 2,800,000 tons of steel per year, while German production lagged behind at 3,500,000 and 1,600,000 tons respectively. In 1913 the German production of pig-iron was 16,500,000 tons as against our own production of 10,250,000 tons, and her steel production was 17,300,000 tons as against our own of no more than 7,650,000 tons. Yet the British predominance in exports remained, and the proportion of our total production for which we could find markets abroad was overwhelmingly greater than our rival's. Germany's search for 'a place in the sun' was not only the imagined but the chief cause of the war of 1914-18.

That Germany was not provided with colonies on the scale of England or France and lacked the immense home market of the United States was, however, not due to the plots of financiers but to the facts of very ancient history, and there was, in fact, nothing that could be done to remedy it. By the twentieth century the time was long past when colonies could be bought and sold and their populations and their resources treated as counters in the diplomatic exchange. Nor was the colonial question the most important. Our pre-eminence in the pre-1914 economy was due to our century-old investments in the East and in the Americas, which provided us with vast invisible exports and were the basis of our pre-eminence as international bankers and carriers of the world's trade. By and large this position had not been built up by conquest nor maintained by military force, and even if we had wished to do so, there was no part of these advantages which could in practice have been assigned to Germany, who, if she wished for fresh territories over which to exercise economic control, must look eastward to the Balkans, to Russia, Poland, and to the Ukraine, and further still to Constantinople and south-eastern Asia. Precisely as in 1939, we could have given Germany to understand that she could, without hindrance from us, set out to conquer and exploit the lands and people of Eastern Europe, but had we done so, and in so doing left ourselves without a friend in the world, would it have been long before Germany turned West to destroy not only France but ourselves? To this question there can be only one answer.

History will view with no greater sympathy the often-repeated argument that if we had abandoned the technique of the old diplomacy and employed the modern method of the John Bull in the china shop the 1914 war would have been avoided. Germany was playing for great stakes, and the only hope of avoiding war lay in the organization of such a counterpoise to her own great strength that, despite the greatness of the stakes, the risks would appear to her too great. This we did, and the policy succeeded as far as Germany was concerned, but if Germany had been loudly threatened the war party in Berlin would have carried the day long before 1914. It is almost certain that the German Government had at no date any fixed

intention of starting hostilities. It is, however, certain that they were determined to imitate the British and French policy of financial expansion, that for this purpose they relied on their ally, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to prevent, forestall, and oppose any movement by Russia towards supremacy in the Balkans, and that at any time after 1905, when the actual plan used for the invasion of France through Belgium took final shape, Germany was ready to draw the sword if her policy was challenged by the forces opposed to her.

When the challenge came from Russia in July 1914 after the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia, war was inevitable except at the price of surrender.

It is often said that when the July crisis began, England should have at once declared her unconditional intention of entering the war if it broke out. This is nonsense. In the first place such a declaration would have led to the fall of the government and for that reason, almost certainly, to the fall of the French Government. We knew perfectly well that if war came Germany was going to march through Belgium and that on that issue we could go into a battle as a united people. To have forfeited that advantage would have been midsummer madness. In the second place, Germany had allowed for and discounted our military intervention on the Continent. No declaration from us would have altered her calculations.

What is no doubt true is that if our whole history had been different and our people a different people, had we been a first-class military power with a conscript army of long standing experienced in continental warfare, the war of 1914 would never have taken place and for a very good reason. No country could possibly sustain the immense military burdens of a great empire, demanding a long service, highly trained professional army, a two-power standard navy, and a continental conscript army, at one and the same time. Had we been as in the twelfth century a continental power we could not have been also an imperial power. Some other power would have been mistress of the seas and in all human probability that power would have been Germany.

CHAPTER TEN

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

THE FIRST WORLD WAR is a story of epoch-making mistakes. Pre-eminently it was a war which was lost, not a war which was won, but, before its unexpected end, both sides had been close to defeat many times. The numbers and dispositions indicated a classic struggle in which the central powers had the great advantage of interior lines and, as the aggressors, the advantage of foreknowledge in timing and preparation, and therefore the tactical initiative, while the allies had the command of the sea and the potential superiority in numbers. The questions which presented themselves to the rival general staffs should, therefore, have been comparatively simple. Could the allies develop their potential superiority in numbers in time to hold the enemy on land on both fronts while British and French sea power enforced a blockade, which must, but only in the very long run, be decisive? Or could the Germans, with their interior lines and their tactical initiative, make use of their immediate superiority to knock out either France or Russia before sea power made itself felt?

This appreciation of the situation must have been even clearer to those who realized that the British Empire was capable, in the conditions then prevailing, of immensely expanding her military contribution. No one probably expected that we should put into the field in Europe alone seven armies on the continental scale, but clearly the imperial contribution to the land war might in the long run be formidable.

The original German plan had corresponded precisely to the requirements of grand strategy. It had been drawn up in 1905 by Count Schlieffen and provided for an overwhelming concentration of force against the French with the object of capturing Belgium, Paris, and the Channel ports in a six weeks'

campaign, long before the great Russian armies could come effectively into play. The reserve divisions were to be incorporated in the fighting line and the invasion was to be made with seven armies deployed on the line Crefeld–Mulhausen, centred on Thionville–Metz. The essence of the plan was that the German right, which was to advance through Belgium, was to be immeasurably stronger than the left. The left was to attempt to pin down the main French armies while the right wing, after crossing Belgium, swung south-west, occupied Paris and then moved eastwards, falling on the rear of the French armies which were expected to be deployed, as in fact they were, along the Franco-German frontier and not for the defence of Belgium. The Schlieffen plan, like all great strategical conceptions, involved risks. The Russian front had to be left, for all practical purposes, to the Austrian armies, and the right wing of the German armies in France had to be dangerously weakened and be prepared, in fact, to fall back, if pressed, to the Rhine. The risk here, however, was more apparent than real. The more deeply the French right got engaged with the German left in Alsace, the greater the chances of the Germans' right and centre succeeding in their great enveloping manoeuvre.

The French plans corresponded to the highest expectations of the German General Staff. Their deployment, as ordered by the French commander-in-chief, General Joffre, left the projected line of advance of the German right virtually open, except for such opposition as the Belgian fortresses might offer. Furthermore, the French, in reaction from the disasters of 1870, had developed a *mystique* of the offensive which had become for them less a military technique than a necessity, not for the destruction of the enemy but for their own reassurance. 'We are determined,' President Fallières had said in 1912, 'to march straight against the enemy without hesitation . . . the offensive alone is suited to the temperament of our soldiers.' The French general staff thus became the instruments of a school of military occultism. Their doctrine was rooted in the distrust of intelligence and the cult of the intuitive approach to the problems of war.

Fortunately for France and for the world, Count Schlieffen, a staff officer of genius, had been succeeded in due course by

General von Moltke, *magni nominis umbra*, the mediocre inheritor of a great name. During the years of his office the Schlieffen plan was drastically modified. According to his original scheme there would have been fifty-nine divisions north of Thionville-Metz and nine to the south. The plan as executed in 1914 gave fifty-five divisions to the north and twenty-three to the south. The change was fundamental in its effects, for it implied, and events showed that the implication was justified, a hesitation to accept the passive role allotted to the German left, or to risk a temporary retreat as the price of a stupendous victory. The German left was now to attack, not to pin and if necessary fall back. It was therefore to drive the French westward, away from the trap, not into it. It was, on the ultimate analysis, this change in the German order of battle, this redistribution of emphasis, which forced the French to retreat and enabled them, in retreating and redeploying their forces, to avoid the envelopment of their left by the German right.

At first everything went according to German expectations. The Belgian fortresses were quickly subdued. The French left, with the British Army, was quite unable to offer effective resistance to the German First and Second Armies under von Kluck and von Bülow. By 24th August the whole of the allied left was in retreat. The French offensives in Lorraine and the Ardennes had failed with stupendous losses. The German left, however, comprising the Sixth and Seventh Armies, had obligingly thrown the French First and Second Armies out of the trap and beaten them back to the Grand Couronne of Nancy and to the Meurthe and were engaged in attacking those strong defensive positions, a manœuvre as futile and wrong-headed as the French offensives.

August 25th was the western day of decision, because on that day General Tappen, chief of the operations section at von Moltke's headquarters at Coblenz, decided to withdraw three corps and one cavalry division from the western front to meet what was believed to be a dangerous situation in East Prussia. General Ludendorff, chief of staff to General von Hindenburg in East Prussia, was actually in process of winning the great battles of Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes and required no reinforcements. Nevertheless, the Second and Third Armies

which had already had to supply two corps to mask Antwerp and one to mask Maubeuge, had to send two more corps and one cavalry division to the east and the vital German right was now reduced from thirty-four to twenty-four divisions.

Meanwhile, on the same day, 25th August, the French Council of Ministers, Joffre, and Gallieni, the new commander of the Paris garrisons, all woke up to the realities of the situation—according to the documents, each independently of the other—and as the result a new army was assembled on the French left to outflank the Germans. Von Kluck was informed of the new French concentration at Amiens but never reported it, abandoned the march on Paris, and wheeled inwards to conform to the movement of von Bülow's Second Army. Joffre was given time for his redeployment. The consequence was the victorious battle of the Marne, fought between 9th September and 15th September as the result of which the Germans were driven back to the Aisne plateau and the allied left, with the British leading, came to rest on the English Channel at the mouth of the Yser. Here, in October and November 1914, the British Army was to fight and win the first of its great battles in the First World War, the defensive First Battle of Ypres.

The battle of the Marne was decisive in the true sense, as was the battle of France in 1940. The Germans might have won the war after the Marne, as the allies did ultimately win the Second World War, but the war the Germans wished and planned to win was irrevocably lost by 15th September. Thenceforward they were committed to a war on two fronts; they had lost the initiative; they had lost the advantage of surprise and of the fog of war which, before the days of the aeroplane, inevitably enveloped the victims of aggression, who could not know, but were forced to guess, the enemy's intentions and the relative strength of his concentrations. Once the French succeeded in their redeployment and in holding a militarily defensible line, the German superiority in numbers was so slight that they could not risk a second offensive immediately, and time, so long as the Russians were in the field, was not on their side.

Thenceforward, until the Russian revolution in 1917, which led to the Russian capitulation at Brest-Litovsk in December of

that year, the First World War conformed to the pattern of the great struggle against Napoleon. The Germans' overall objective was to destroy our sea power and thus break our blockade. First, they attempted to capture the Channel ports in the First and Second Battles of Ypres, and thus effectively to threaten invasion; secondly, they attempted to break out of our strategic envelopment by bringing Turkey into the war and with her help to get control of the Eastern Mediterranean; thirdly, they attempted a direct attack on our sea power by the fleet action at Jutland; finally, they attempted, in the far more deadly submarine war of 1917-18, to impose a counter-blockade. At no time were the Germans with their Austrian allies strong enough to attempt a purely military decision on the Russian front, because, unlike Hitler's Germany or Napoleon's France, they had lost, not won, the initial military campaign in the west. On the Russian front they therefore relied on the political effects of a series of local offensives.

The allies on their part suffered from all the confusion of counsel which seems inseparable from alliances between sea and land powers. With this aspect of the grand strategy the generation which knew the Second World War is sufficiently familiar. The French always, the Russians from 1915, pressed us for more and more direct military aid. Meanwhile, all the allies experienced and succumbed to the temptation to attempt a premature military decision before the sea blockade and the long process of attrition had done its work. These temptations assailed the British with particular virulence because of our natural predisposition to amphibious operations and our insular distrust of continental allies. At no time were we confident of Russia's determination to keep her word not to make a separate peace, and from 1916 onward we had increasing and justified doubts as to the morale of the French armies. Our efforts for an early decision were first the Gallipoli campaign and secondly the great military offensive of 1916 in France.

Nominally Gallipoli was an attempt to clear a direct and easy route for supplies to Russia and to hold off the Turkish armies from threatening to turn the Russian flank. Actually it was the opening of an attempt to take the German positions in reverse. Had the campaign succeeded, an attack through

the Balkans would have taken Austria-Hungary out of the war and led to the Russian invasion of Germany and a decisive and early victory. War, however, must not be confused with strategy. Strategy is only the framework within which men and material can be effectively employed and in Gallipoli the men and the material were not there. That the strategic conception was sound, not to say brilliant, has long been accepted, but the sounder the conception, the greater the misfortune of its adoption when the means and the will to put it into execution were alike lacking. The allies' mistake over Gallipoli was that of von Moltke in modifying the Schlieffen plan. If the campaign was to have been fought, it should have been won, and it could not have been won on the principle of limited liability. The French front should have been thinned and overwhelming force concentrated to exploit what should have been the surprise of the landing. We know that surprise was possible in 1915 because it proved possible in the days of the aeroplane in 1942, 1943, and 1944. In Gallipoli surprise was not attempted and there was no force to exploit the landing when it was made.

The parallel with von Moltke goes further, for, like him, Sir Ian Hamilton, the British commander-in-chief, lost control of the operation at the start. His dispositions were possible, but the local commands were faulty and he kept no adequate reserves under his hand nor any control over his subordinates. When he made his attempt in August 1915 to break the deadlock by a fresh landing at Suvla Bay, which was to turn the Turkish position and release the armies tied down, since 25th April, at the tip of Cape Helles and at Anzac, he made every mistake open to a commander-in-chief. He accepted as commander of the new landing a general in whom he had declared his lack of confidence. He employed on a complex and hazardous operation a complete corps of wholly untrained troops instead of using his reinforcements to take over the prepared and secure positions at the tip of the peninsula and entrusting the new landing to experienced troops, and, above all, to proved leaders; finally he allowed a fatal interval to pass before going to Suvla Bay himself to attempt to retrieve a situation by that time hopelessly lost.

The chief inspirer of the Gallipoli campaign was Mr. Winston Churchill, but if he had the credit for the conception and no responsibility for its management, he received almost all the blame and not altogether wrongly, because it is certain that he took the responsibility of pressing the decision on unwilling colleagues and in the face of the opposition of his chief professional adviser, Admiral Lord Fisher. And so, like the great German battle of manœuvre, Gallipoli came to nothing because of faint hearts and indecisive minds. The Gallipoli peninsula was evacuated and the troops dispersed to different theatres of war. The entry of Turkey into the war and our failure to defeat her at Gallipoli added immensely to British responsibilities, because we had not only to defend Egypt and the Suez Canal but also to prevent the Turkish forces from occupying the Persian Gulf and threatening India. We were thus involved from 1915 onward in four land campaigns—the western front, Gallipoli and Salonika, Palestine, and Mesopotamia. Only in Gallipoli and at Salonika were there any French troops apart from the western front.

It was inevitable that the initiation of these separate campaigns and the building up of supplies along ever-increasing lines of communications should be a chequered process. The great British armies which had come into being by the middle of 1915 were new creations, whose real training only began on the battlefield and whose regimental officers and N.C.O.s were inexperienced and without any military education. The rapid expansion of our land forces had not been prepared, and the tasks imposed on the very limited number of senior regular officers proved in many cases far beyond their capacity. This was particularly the case in what were regarded at Whitehall as the sideshows, Gallipoli, Palestine, and Mesopotamia. All these campaigns made a disastrous beginning and saw much 'grief' among senior officers, including all the original commanders-in-chief. On the western front the second battle of Ypres was a successful defensive, but ill-advised, limited offensives in Flanders, in Artois, and in Champagne, had led, later in 1915, to great losses with no corresponding gains. Meanwhile the Germans, pursuing the same delusive triumphs that had distracted Napoleon from his principal enemy, had won in 1915 a

series of spectacular victories against the Russians and in the Balkans. Bulgaria had joined the central powers, Warsaw fell, Serbia was overrun. The architect of the victories was von Falkenhayn who had superseded von Moltke in April 1915 in the supreme direction of the German campaign.

Almost the only satisfactory event for the allies in 1915 had been the entry of Italy into the war as our ally; this pinned down half the Austrian armies. Nevertheless, 1915 closed in an atmosphere of considerable political unrest, particularly in England and in Russia. The Russian discontents were, as the world was soon to learn, deep-seated and only a swift and decisive victory could have cured them. The British case was different and the consequences of our discontents more subtle and longer delayed.

The impact of the 1914 war on Great Britain and the empire was at first surprisingly small—ininitely less than might be supposed by those who only remember the Second World War. The 1939 war had been long prepared; on both sides the whole resources of propaganda had been employed; there was a vivid expectation of a vast catastrophe. In 1914 war was still regarded by every one in Great Britain as an occupation for professional soldiers; air power was still in the future, and the only threat to civilians at home was that of invasion which our fleet was implicitly trusted to prevent. But if war was a matter for the professionals, it is also true to say, and necessary to remember, that we were still in 1914 the greatest world power, controlling the greatest empire known to history, and, as such, well used to having our regular army fight for us all over the world. In South Africa we had learnt, too, that volunteer forces, particularly if they come from the great open spaces of the British Dominions, could fight not only gallantly but with supreme efficiency. It was in the professional and volunteer spirit that Great Britain entered the First World War, of which Lord Kitchener, almost alone in Europe, foresaw the character and the duration.

In defence of our treaty obligations to Belgium, the great forces of nonconformity had been rallied without difficulty in support of a war in fact imposed on us not only by honour but by the duty of self-preservation. But there was no ideological

conflict and no popular passions were roused beyond the quite illogical feeling that, whereas it was a solemn moral obligation on Great Britain to have a pre-eminent navy, it was ungentlemanly of the Germans to be equally thoroughly prepared, and equally predominant, on land. The Conservative opposition, led since 1912 by Mr. Andrew Bonar Law, with Mr. Arthur Balfour reclining easily in a back seat, offered its support to Mr. Asquith's government, but were neither offered, nor at the time desired, office. It was essentially a peace-time administration which led England, for the first time in a hundred years, into a great continental war. Lord Morley and Mr. John Burns resigned on our entry into it and Lord Kitchener joined the government as Secretary of State for War, but there was no revision of the machinery of government and no attempt at a centralized military-political direction of the war effort.

As long as things went well, the opposition and the press were alike content, although the press, under the inspiration of Lord Northcliffe, was tempted, for the first time in British history, to influence public policy by a direct appeal to the public over the heads of the politicians. A first lamentable consequence had been the removal of that brilliant sailor Prince Louis of Battenberg from his post as First Sea Lord in 1914. Generally, however, the public rested secure in its trust in the professional soldiers and sailors, and notably in Lord Kitchener and Lord Fisher.

By mid-1915 things were vastly different. There was a shortage of high-explosive shells; there had been heavy casualties in unsuccessful offensives on the western front; Gallipoli looked like becoming a costly and even an ignominious failure. Above all, some of the new armies had come into action and the casualty lists were becoming a nation-wide concern. Inevitably the direction of the war began to pass into new hands. In May the shell shortage shook public confidence and at the end of the month a Coalition Government was formed. Lord Haldane was driven out of office by Tory prejudice and Mr. Winston Churchill, forced to leave the Admiralty, preferred to resign from the administration. The next month Mr. Lloyd George became Minister of Munitions in name, but in fact the protagonist of a more active central direction of the war

and a closer political control over the soldiers and sailors. These changes did not, however, interrupt the tide of defeats. The defeats were local but they were disturbing in their cumulative effect. By the end of the year Serbia was lost, the attempt to bring Greece into the war had failed, and our force at Salonika was consequently powerless; we had been defeated in Mesopotamia and our army was besieged in Kut; the evacuation of Gallipoli was in full swing; in France the autumn had seen another costly and useless British offensive at Loos. In December Sir John French was replaced by Sir Douglas Haig as commander-in-chief in France and in January 1916 the first Compulsory Service Bill passed the House of Commons. The conscription of single men began.

Nevertheless, the omens for success were not favourable. It was evident that Germany, as long as Russia held, could not win the war, but it was far less evident to the mind of those times that we must in that event ultimately win it. The new political measures had greatly increased the supplies of men and munitions and had to a much lesser extent strengthened the civil and political administration. Since Mr. Winston Churchill had resigned there had been not an intensification but a slowing down of strategical thinking to the point when it had virtually ceased. The easterners, as the partisans of Gallipoli and Salonika were then known, were discredited by events. The westerners, of whom Mr. Lloyd George was reluctantly one—and his influence was greatly increased by his success as Minister of Munitions—shared and compromised between two rival strategical theories, both of them hopelessly unsound. The first was the French theory of a war of attrition. The numbers of the allies on the western front were increasing steadily. The numbers of Germans could not be further increased and if they were pinned down by a steady stream of 'limited' offensives must be slowly, perhaps, but inexorably reduced. The time must therefore come when the allies would have such superiority of numbers that they could launch a decisive general offensive. This theory had the defects of all statistical calculations. Firstly, while it was true of inanimate figures, it was not necessarily true when the units of measurement represented human beings; secondly, it was true only in the circumstances in which

it was made and the circumstances might change. The theory was brought to ruin and its exponents to disaster by these inherent errors. The French Army, worn out by a series of costly offensives producing no demonstrable result, mutinied at the beginning of 1917. The Russians collapsed in December of the same year. Both these events derived directly from the faulty strategical theory of the French High Command. In the first place, men will risk and, indeed, consciously sacrifice, their lives to gain great ends but only provided they accept the necessary relationship between the end and the means proposed. Battles yielding no possibility of decisive victory are risks which not even the finest army in the world will take continuously, month after month and year after year. Secondly, time was not on the side of the allies. The limited character of the offensives of 1915 had allowed the Germans to deliver a series of shattering blows against Russia, whose position was in danger of being turned as the result of German and Turkish victories in the Balkans and the Near East. The Russian political front was destined to break under the strain of these events.

The risks of the position had, by the beginning of 1916, begun to impress themselves on the French military authorities, but they were far more clearly present to the British and French politicians and, notably, to M. Briand and Mr. Lloyd George. Unfortunately, the alternative strategical theory to which the partial abandonment of the theory of attrition gave birth was even more fallacious. It had its origin in the then famous shells controversy. The British Army in 1914 had been ill supplied with artillery, and far too much of its limited supply of ammunition had been shrapnel instead of high explosive. Unable to make headway without more artillery support in their direct frontal assaults on the German positions, our generals came to believe that, if there were only a sufficient weight of artillery in support, it would be possible to blow the enemy's wire entanglements and entrenchments to pieces before the attack and thus win ground with comparatively small losses. Given enough artillery, Mr. Lloyd George had observed, the allies could walk to Berlin with nothing more formidable than umbrellas in their hands. In certain circumstances the 'attrition theory' could be defended. It contained at least an element

of truth. The 'artillery theory' which gained the upper hand in 1916 had nothing whatever to be said for it. It was nonsense from start to finish. Firstly, it negatived the possibility of surprise and enabled the enemy to concentrate his reserves behind the zone of attack and out of range of the artillery. Secondly, the striking force of infantry was in the long run, and, as 1918 was to prove, perilously, reduced by the demands on manpower both of the vast munitions organization and of the artillery regiments themselves. Thirdly, the power of high explosive to destroy wire and entrenchments was hopelessly over-estimated. Fourthly, there were endless tactical and engineering devices which an intelligent enemy could quickly apply to minimize his casualties under even the fiercest bombardment. Finally, it was impossible with these tactics to develop the attack, even when the whole of the enemy's front-line system had been captured, because of the relative immobility of the unmechanized field artillery of those days and because the immense destruction worked by an intensive bombardment of some days' duration made the ground impassable except for light infantry.

The catastrophe that resulted from the decision¹ to put this new theory to the test and to seek a decision on the western front in 1916 is known to history as the battle of the Somme. Its consequences were measureless and reach down to our own day.

Fortunately the lunacy was not all on one side. Four months before the battle of the Somme began, the French were called in to sustain the full force of a tremendous German offensive at Verdun which severely limited the extent of French co-operation in the Somme battles. Nevertheless the German losses in the Verdun battles were immense and reflect the undoubted fact that they, like the allied commanders, had hopelessly over-estimated the power of the offensive, as then conducted and armed, against prepared positions. But for the losses at Verdun, which prevented any effective German counter-attack, the

¹ It has since been said that Mr. Lloyd George and Lord Kitchener were opposed to the Somme offensive. It is not, however, true that this offensive was forced on us by political considerations or by the strain imposed on the French by the battle of Verdun. The battle was begun with high hopes of a decisive success. The plans had been laid months before the battle began.

allied offensive on the Somme might have ended in a disastrous military defeat. As it was, its far-reaching consequences were mainly social and political.

The Somme was the graveyard of Britain's volunteer forces raised by the foresight of Lord Kitchener in 1914, and now for the first time thrown *en masse* into a great series of battles. The casualties on the first day, 1st July 1916, exceeded 60,000—the greatest loss which the British Army has ever experienced, or ever will, in one day of our long history. The casualties of the five months of battle were nearly 500,000, of whom a distressingly high proportion were killed or seriously wounded. They included, in the nature of the case, very many of those who in normal circumstances would have become in the twenties and thirties, leaders in politics, industry, commerce, the arts, and sciences. A particularly adverse principle of selection was at work among the officers of the new armies, because the regular army, very wrongly from all points of view, had closed the doors, as far as all staff and higher appointments were concerned, to so-called 'temporary' officers. The regimental officers of the first new armies, therefore, included not only a whole generation of students from all walks of life but the flower of the younger members of all professions, scholars, scientists, lawyers, teachers, business men, engineers, writers, artists, and administrators.

War has often but wrongly been compared to chess. The final result, it is said, alone matters. Unfortunately, war is to be compared not to chess but to roulette. All losses in war are absolute and irrecoverable. As the result of the Somme battle we emerged immensely weaker at the end of the war than need have been the case. The only redeeming feature of the picture is that its tragic outlines impressed themselves for ever on some of those on whom would fall the burden of the Second World War, and notably on Mr. Winston Churchill, whose conduct of affairs between 1940 and 1945, like that of the military commanders who served his administration, was directed consistently and effectively towards minimizing casualties. Unfortunately, the political consequences of the Somme battles lacked any such redeeming feature. They had the effect of a cataclysm.

Up to the end of 1916 it had been no part of our war aims, any more than it had been in the Napoleonic wars, to destroy the regime on the Continent. Neither the democratization of the German Empire nor the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire had been among our objectives. Even the retrocession of Alsace and Lorraine had not, up to the end of 1916, been contemplated. We wished, chiefly, to restore, and then to preserve from future attack, the rights of the small nationalities and notably the independent sovereignties of Belgium, Luxembourg, and Serbia. These countries, moreover, were to be compensated for the injuries done to them. The conflict, nevertheless, had remained for the first two years essentially a political one; the enthusiasm of the individual citizens of all the belligerent countries was engaged by their loyalty to their own, not by their detestation of their enemy's government. For the disciplined and conservative Germans and the peace-loving if cynical peoples of the Dual Monarchy, this remained true until the end of the war. Not even the most fanatical of our enemies suggested as a war aim putting a Habsburg or a Hohenzollern to rule over France or England, nor did any one announce as a German war aim the abolition of parliamentary government. In England, however, the disasters of 1915 and 1916, and in particular the immense casualties for which public opinion was wholly unprepared, had a revolutionary effect. If this slaughter was the price of empire in the twentieth century, then empire was a crime. If it was not the necessary price but the consequence of a series of blunders, then our political regime stood condemned. The Somme marked the end of 'upper class' predominance in the government of England, and the rebirth of that deep-seated (although not by 1917 widespread) hostility to the whole regime which had shaken the oligarchic England of William Pitt in the Napoleonic wars and was now to shake to its foundations the nineteenth-century Liberal economic order. There were other and more complex consequences of the 1916 disasters. The war losses, for the first time in English history, were felt in every home and the natural consequence was a violent uprush of political consciousness and most particularly about foreign affairs. And because grief and suffering demand compensation and reward, because men will die bravely but

must never die in vain, out of this new and unrestricted passion of interest in the politics of Europe was born a myth, that between the hard reality of a world where men, by the millions, were blown to pieces by high explosive and the desired world of eternal peace stood only the autocrats, the militarists, the 'old gangs' who everywhere denied power to the people. Somewhere there must be order in this chaos, some light behind the vast and tragic obscurity, something still living in the midst of death. We must remember, hard as it is to-day, that in 1916 national war was a new experience to the people of Great Britain—not superficially new because not directly experienced, but profoundly new because not previously remembered. French and German armies have been on the march for six centuries and the Low Countries have known invasion every other generation for more than a thousand years. There has never been a time in the history of continental Europe when there were not men living to speak of the last great war; for the people of England there had never been a great continental war. Now there was, for all of them, a war and it did not seem to them great, yet it must be great, else those they loved had died untimely. Was it great as marking the destruction of the old aristocratic order? Or great as marking the dawn of universal peace? The one clearly should involve the other, and so the limitless objectives of universal war would find fulfilment in the limitless happiness of universal peace.

These may seem momentous revolutions of thought and transformations of psychology to issue in nothing more formidable than the supersession, in December 1916, of Mr. Asquith, Lord Lansdowne, and Sir Edward Grey by Mr. Lloyd George, Lord Milner, Sir Edward Carson, and Mr. Andrew Bonar Law. But enough of the documents are now available to make it clear that much more was at stake on this change of government than a more vigorous prosecution of the war as an assuagement of national uneasiness at our defeats in the field. There was a demand for new men and new methods which led inexorably to a demand for new war aims. The first German peace feeler was put out at the end of 1916 and *pourparlers* went on through most of 1917 with Austria; if they had been pressed to a conclusion the peace would have redrawn the map of Europe, at

the expense of Germany, by reconstructing within the frontiers of 1772 an Austrian federation of self-governing states. But the new men and methods were, by reason of a lack of intellectual convictions, even less capable of making peace than of making war; Mr. Lloyd George declared for 'the knock-out blow'; 1917 saw the last hope fade of peace within the framework of that world order which we had gone to war in 1914 to preserve, not to destroy.

The year 1917 did not bring military victory any closer. The rejection of the first German peace proposals led to an intensification of bitterness and a great extension of the area of destruction. It ushered in the unrestricted submarine war which, partly owing to the refusal of the British Admiralty to agree to convoys for merchantmen, came nearer to winning the war for Germany than any military move since the invasion of France and Belgium, caused us ruinous losses and great privations, put out of court all hope of a negotiated peace, and brought the United States reluctantly but firmly into the war on 6th April 1917. Simultaneously, however, revolution had broken out in Russia and, seven days after the American declaration of war, on 13th April, the first all-Russian Soviet Congress opened in Petrograd. Five weeks later the total failure of the French spring offensive under General Nivelle (who had superseded General Joffre at Mr. Lloyd George's insistence earlier in the year) led to mutinies in the French Army and the appointment of General Pétain to supreme command, with General Foch as chief-of-staff. The autumn was distinguished by the costly and unsuccessful British offensive at Passchendaele, by the great German victories in Italy, which compelled both Britain and France to send strong forces to Italy's assistance, and by the capitulation of Russia. With the Russian collapse the initiative passed from us to our enemies. The world's fortunes seemed at their nadir.

Yet there was some light in the sky, at home and even abroad. Mr. Lloyd George's 'unquenchable spirit and endless power of expedient' had, as Professor Feiling truly says, 'dedicated the country to an extent hitherto unknown to total war. In his hands the office of Prime Minister became almost presidential, since he dealt direct with departments, industry, the services,

and the press. His small War Cabinet, on occasion expanded to a Cabinet of empire by the addition of dominion ministers, superseded our familiar system, Bonar Law being ordinarily left to manage Parliament while the Prime Minister gave himself wholly to the war. Here he did immense service. Through his insistence the greatest overriding danger of all, the submarine, was defeated and by August our monthly loss reduced below 200,000 tons; Beatty replaced Jellicoe, and the Admiralty accepted a system of convoy for merchantmen, which they had long resisted. Dictatorial powers were given to new ministries of food and shipping, home production was multiplied by financial guarantees, and food was rationed.

‘In this dark year a light dawned and slowly broadened in the East. In March under General Maude, a master of preparation and tactics, our forces entered Baghdad, while meantime our defence of Egypt had necessarily grown into an offensive-defensive, over the Sinai peninsula and the Red Sea. In the spring our coastal advance was severely checked at Gaza, but in June Allenby was sent from France to take command and, organized by a man of genius, T. E. Lawrence, King Hussein’s Arabs were besieging Mecca and creeping up the Hedjaz railway. In October Allenby’s victory at Beersheba outflanked the Turks’ hold on the coast, and in December he entered Jerusalem. In June also the allies had at last compelled the deposition of King Constantine, installed Venizelos in power, and, from this much-divided Greece, hoped to strike the Turks nearer home.’¹

Finally, and perhaps most important of all, the battle of Cambrai had been fought and, as the records tell, lost, but it was nevertheless a portent of victory. To those fighting in France at the time it was certainly that. To them, who could not know of developments elsewhere, it was the first sign of daylight after a long and nightmare-ridden night. Two years earlier Mr. Lloyd George had realized the obvious truth, that a great concentration of fire power could have decisive results on a battlefield. He had, however, failed to define the problem, which was to combine fire power with protection, the ability to manœuvre, and the possibility of surprise. Static fire power

¹ *A History of England* (Macmillan, 1950).

can destroy but it cannot generate energy; it cannot add mobility to mass. The architects of the battle of Cambrai were the men who had faced and solved this problem. They were the inventors of the tank, the self-propelled and self-protected field-gun which need not lurk hidden among the trees three miles behind the lines, itself needing to be protected from the curious attention of the enemy by four lines of unarmoured infantry.

The tank, which had been first used at the battle of the Somme, owed nothing to the new men and the new methods. The only minister of Cabinet rank who had taken an interest in it from its chequered beginning was Mr. Winston Churchill, to whose generous and far-sighted audacity this invention owed a great debt. Tank development was possibly retarded, rather than accelerated, by the events which led to the fall of Mr. Asquith's administration. In the course of 1917, however, Mr. Winston Churchill returned to public office as Minister of Munitions and he was able to assist and expedite the manufacture of tanks so that the first tank battle in history could be fought in the last weeks of that year. The tank was the key which unlocked the door to Germany, because it restored the power of manœuvre. It had always been possible for infantry, supported by artillery, to batter a way into or even across the enemy's front-line position, but nothing had been left of the infantry in the process and the reinforcements, even when they existed, had been tied down within the captured trench system until the artillery could be moved forward to support another attack. By that time a new set of earthworks, as formidable almost as the last, would have been built up. A force of tanks could break the deadlock. It could without previous preparations overrun and hold a substantial sector of the enemy position and enable the infantry, fresh and relatively intact, to take the adjoining positions in flank or in reverse. In this way the fatal and futile frontal assault could be avoided and the fight could be taken to the enemy by fresh troops at the time and place chosen by the allies, instead of at the place dictated by the enemy.

This decisive invention was prematurely disclosed to the enemy in the closing stages of the Somme battle, but despite this the tanks at Cambrai achieved a surprise which ought to

have been decisive. It was not so because the disastrous losses experienced by our forces in the earlier 1917 battles, following on the losses of 1916, had deprived the British commander-in-chief of the confidence of the British Government and, therefore, of adequate reserves. Such reserves as there were, and the number became a matter of dispute, were kept in England. The War Cabinet was unwilling to entrust to Sir Douglas Haig the last of our manpower, which was not released to him until the German offensive of March 1918 made it necessary to stake all on the defensive battles to which we had been reduced by the follies of the preceding two years.

The political situation in Britain in 1917 and the early months of 1918 was a simple one. Mr. Asquith's Liberal Government was out of favour by the end of 1915. Mr. Asquith's Coalition Government fell at the end of 1916. No impartial historian can seriously criticize either the press or the politicians (and the people were never consulted) for either decision. What bred distrust and disillusion in France was the discovery (which first communicated itself in the harshest form to the soldier on the western front late in 1917) that Mr. Lloyd George's government had plenty of driving power but no tactical plan and no strategic objective. As a result it drove the British armies not to Berlin but into the barbed wire at Arras and the mud of Passchendaele.

Cambrai had been the final test. The government of *arrivistes* should at least have understood the decisive power of the newly arrived weapon. They had, in fact, never bothered about it. They had dared to insist on a change (which proved to be disastrous) in the French High Command in 1917. They never ventured to change the British High Command, to which they never extended their confidence, nor were they themselves trusted by it. They had torn up the plans prepared by General Joffre and Sir Douglas Haig for the 1917 campaign and their own plans had failed so completely that the British armies had been involved and worn out in a series of costly defensive actions. The Cambrai engagement was a pale echo of the plan made by the general staff for the tactical exploitation of the new weapon and now the plan had been reduced to failure by the shortage of manpower.

But if the British Army had lost confidence in the new government, as it certainly had by the beginning of 1918, the British at home were sceptical but powerless. There was no highly respected figure above the battle to whom to turn, and there were no young men of promise who enjoyed the confidence of the country. It was in a mood of sceptical acquiescence to the apparently inevitable confusion that the British people awaited the year 1918. They had neither fear of defeat nor expectation of victory. The British soldiers fought, as always, without envy or malice and remained ready for any sacrifice in a cause which they still judged (and rightly) to involve great issues for mankind. There was no observed limit to their endurance or goodwill; they were faithful to the end, but they had no illusions. To them one politician was like another, and all were useless. It was on themselves that the burden would fall, and they would sustain it. They trusted their regimental officers, but if their generals were ciphers only they regarded themselves as fortunate. An active distrust of high authority was the foundation of their essential and admirable piety. With every day that passed the indictment that could be drawn against the politicians at home grew more forcible until the culminating moment of the first great German offensive of 1918 which drove the British back to their 1915 position, and, for the Germans, so nearly snatched victory out of defeat.

At this point Mr. Asquith, moved to indignation by Mr. Lloyd George's refusal to send to France reserves which had been available, as he claimed, moved a vote of censure in the government. For his facts he relied on figures made public in a letter to the press by Major-General Maurice, an officer of exceptional character and distinction, then serving at the War Office, who sacrificed his career in discharge of what he rightly deemed the moral obligation to make the facts known. Mr. Lloyd George challenged General Maurice's figures, but felt it impossible to refuse Mr. Asquith's request for an inquiry of some sort. Mr. Asquith's vote of censure demanded a Parliamentary Committee. Mr. Lloyd George retaliated by offering a judicial inquiry. If Mr. Asquith had accepted the offer, the inquiry might have proved the substantial accuracy of the charges against the administration and Mr. Lloyd George's government

must in that event have resigned. Mr. Asquith, however, would not give way and Mr. Lloyd George, having offered a judicial inquiry and the offer having been refused, was able to defeat the vote of censure. The event was decisive over the whole course of politics from then until the present day. Firstly, it marked the first direct and unanswered challenge ever offered to the integrity of a British Prime Minister. The discussion did not turn on the wisdom of the argument offered in defence of a policy but on the accuracy of the figures given by the Prime Minister to the House of Commons. Secondly, it spelt the final and, as events have shown, the irretrievable ruin of the Liberal party, an event which was bound to mean the emergence of the Socialists as the only possible alternative government to that of the Conservatives. Thirdly, it meant that the bitterness of party and personal strife would prevent the most experienced, the best educated, and the most liberal-minded statesmen left in Europe from playing a part in the peace negotiations which must in any event soon begin.

If, however, Mr. Lloyd George was yielding nothing on the political front, he had made a rapid enough *volte-face* in France and had at last agreed to place the British Armies, bent but not broken by the ferocious German attacks of March 1918, under French command. On the advice of Lord Milner, who represented the British Government at the decisive conference at Doullens, the command was given to Marshal Foch, the only soldier on the western front of whom it can be said that he remained in the public estimation capable of commanding although he commanded.

Foch was not a soldier of genius but he was a man of the highest qualifications, with a moral authority unequalled by any other British or French general. His appointment was a decisive factor in winning the war because it spelt to the unbroken but harassed infantry of two nations a fresh, vigorous, professional, and undivided mind, applied to the problem of winning their war. The root cause of the disasters on the western and other fronts had been the inability of the French and British parliamentary systems to conduct a war. The real reason why there had been no united command was that both parliaments were determined to go on making the attempt to

win the war on their own. Gallipoli, the greatest strategic conception of war, had failed for lack of will power at home and generalship abroad. The armies of the west had come to the edge of disaster for precisely the same reasons. Neither government was ready to insist on unified control; no generals had been able, as great men must be able, to impose their will on events. In Marshal Foch the allied armies had the very personification of will—a strategic brain morally determined and at last free from the influences of divided and hesitant minds. The event spelt victory. But the victory that was won could not cancel out the battles that had been lost. The French disasters that preceded the Marne had cost France losses in men from which she has never recovered. Her losses, in proportion to her young manpower, were the heaviest of any that fell to the belligerents. Secondly, the disaster in Gallipoli had led to the Russian Revolution and had permanently lowered our own prestige in Asia. The first power to defy us after the peace of 1919 was Turkey. Thirdly, the prolongation of a war that could and should have been settled by a negotiated peace in 1917 had had catastrophic effects in Central Europe, where the framework of society was breaking up by November 1918. Partly, that was due to the blockade and the demoralizing effects of serious starvation on non-combatants, but mainly to the hopes inspired in the breast of every racial minority by the advent of the United States into the war. In the course of 1918, as the American troops poured into Europe, it became clear to all the belligerents that the United States, with her vast reserves of men, money, and munitions, was the potential master of Europe.

The United States in 1917 was very different in temper from the nation to whom Western Europe looks to-day as the sole hope for her survival. Until 1914 the doors of North America had been wide open and immigrants from Eastern and Central Europe, from Scandinavia, from Italy, and from Great Britain and Ireland poured in every year in hundreds of thousands. For centuries North America had been the accepted and normal refuge of the outcast, the oppressed, and the persecuted. The descendants of these immigrants had become, amazingly quickly, '100 per cent Americans' but they retained a vivid

memory of the country of their origin, and, almost without exception, a vivid distrust of the regime from which their ancestors had fled or against which they had successfully rebelled. This distrust was kept alive and politically effective by the constant stream of new immigrants, some of them, like the Poles, the Czechs, the Slovaks, or the Irish, still coming from countries vainly seeking self-government, all of them coming in search of a better way of life than their homeland provided.

It was inevitable, in the circumstances, that the entry of the United States into the war should act as an almost immediate solvent of the old political order on the Continent. To the pressure of racial groups in the United States was added the pleas of racial minorities in Central and Eastern Europe, a wholly new political pattern was given to the war, and the French and British Governments had nothing to do but to conform to it in some degree. Seeing that the map of Europe was now to be redrawn, the British and French at once set out on a random search for some form of international political organization which should solve the problems (of which they and they alone were really conscious) which must be created by the break-up of Europe into a congeries of small, inexperienced, and probably uneconomic states.

The deluge of new political ideas fell on soil rendered exceptionally receptive by the disillusion born of so many defeats to so little purpose. Here, in the dream of a new world order, was the psychological satisfaction for which millions had been seeking and hitherto in vain. It was inevitable, moreover, that the loudest propagandists of the new order should be the least experienced in the political facts of Europe's life and history and in the practical business of government. The most powerful statesmen in Britain and France were still, and so remained up to the very eve of victory in November 1918, wholly concentrated on the day to day business of the war. Mr. Asquith, Sir Edward Grey, Lord Lansdowne, and Lord Haldane, the four men in England with the most intimate knowledge of Europe and its history and conditions, were out of office and so bitterly opposed politically to Mr. Lloyd George that, if they had raised their voice to challenge directly the development of the allied war aims, they would have been disregarded as

partisans engaged in a political manœuvre. Moreover, up to July 1918 it was the allies who appeared to be in danger of a military defeat and it was no time for divided counsel. In the circumstances, the situation as it developed during the summer and autumn of 1918 was governed more and more by pledges given in Washington to representatives of different underground organizations claiming to represent racial minorities or oppressed peoples. In June 1918 we undertook to support the national aspirations of Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, and Yugoslavs and in August the Czechoslovaks were recognized as an allied nation. In October the British Government recognized the Polish National Army as autonomous, allied and co-belligerent. On the 31st of October revolution broke out in Vienna and Budapest, and Austria and Hungary proclaimed themselves independent states. On 7th November Bavaria proclaimed itself a republic. On 9th November the Kaiser, and on 12th November the emperor of Austria, abdicated.

The later of these events followed from the great allied offensive launched by Marshal Foch on 8th August 1918. The German offensives of March, April, and May had put the allies under great pressure, but the Germans were, as was later discovered, too short of men and supplies, and particularly of transport, to launch the three offensives simultaneously or to press them to a conclusion. Their purpose was really political, to divide the British and French Armies and place one or other of the two governments in a position where they would urge their ally to agree to a negotiated peace. Instead of dividing the two armies, Ludendorff's ambitious scheme had succeeded in the far more difficult task of uniting them. The successful co-ordination of the allied effort enabled the military position in the west to be finally stabilized by 14th June. A continuous series of great battles between 8th August and 24th September, saw the whole of the German armies in rapid retreat, and on 24th September the German High Command told Berlin that it would be necessary to ask for an armistice. Just before that date the allied armies in Italy, Macedonia, and Palestine had also passed to the offensive; before the end of October Turkey and Bulgaria had both capitulated as the result of defeat in the field.

How little these resounding victories were to the credit of the British politicians is shown by the fact that as late as July 1918 Lord Milner, after a visit to France on behalf of the War Cabinet, reported that it would be unwise to seek a decision before the spring of 1919; Mr. Lloyd George at once took the astonishing precaution of writing to Sir Douglas Haig and disclaiming any responsibility for the offensive scheduled to begin on 8th August.

The decisive factors which led to the collapse of the central powers and their Balkan ally were the blockade, the solvent effect of the encouragement given to racial minorities by the United States, the political effect on all our enemies of President Wilson's Fourteen Points (and, most notably, the promise of no annexations and no indemnities), and the increasing influx of American troops to the western front which made it necessary for the Germans to seek a military decision, if ever, early in 1918. Given these conditions it required only resolute will, an undivided command, and the intelligent use of the new weapons to secure a military decision. It is necessary, in the interests of historical justice, to emphasize the fact that, although, by August 1918, the war could not have been lost, it was as the result, and solely as the result, of a series of brilliant and decisive battles finely conceived and gallantly fought (mainly by the British) that the war was won. It was as solely due to the gallantry of the rank and file of the French and British Armies and the skill and courage of the British Navy that the war had not been earlier lost by the mistakes of the high commands and the divided and inconclusive leadership of the allied governments.

The Armistice of 11th November was not signed, as has been so often said, on the basis of the Fourteen Points. When the Germans asked for an armistice the allies had demanded the unconditional surrender of the German forces on sea and land; they would not grant an armistice on any other terms. It is quite irrelevant to inquire how the German Government, which had, as a matter of historical fact, ceased to exist on that day, interpreted the Fourteen Points at that time. The armistice arose out of the military situation and was entered into at the request of the German High Command for the purpose of

saving their armies from useless casualties and saving the Rhineland from devastation by an invading army. To get these immense benefits they had to surrender without conditions. It was a free choice. Hopeless though the German military position was, Ludendorff could probably have withdrawn his armies behind the Rhine and prolonged the war until 1919. He judged, and rightly, that surrender was the proper course, and whatever blame attaches to the British, French, and United States Governments for the subsequent developments, none at all attaches to the signature of the armistice. The Armistice of 11th November 1918 was an honourable arrangement, honourably observed by both sides. It is a point of interest to antiquarians.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

HOMES FOR HEROES

IN DECEMBER 1918 Mr. Lloyd George, at the head of the National Coalition which perhaps too loudly claimed to have won the war, appealed to the country for a mandate to win the peace. The appeal was made to an electorate just increased from under seven millions in 1914 to over twenty millions. 'Property, hitherto viewed as a reward of skill, intelligence, and the basis of political power since Parliament began' in the fourteenth century, 'made way for human equality.'¹ Men for the first time enjoyed adult suffrage, and the vote had been extended to women of thirty and over. This political revolution reflected first and foremost the sacrifices freely made by all classes and both sexes in the four years of war. It followed inevitably on the introduction of conscription, the inclusion of women in the armed forces, and their replacement of men in the munition factories. The extension of the franchise had been logically accompanied by a great extension of education under the Fisher Act, which proposed to raise the school age to fourteen and to institute part-time education up to eighteen. But the new franchise reflected also a revolutionary change in the view which Parliament itself took of the purposes and prerogatives of government in the new age. Summarily described, this change was the transition from the negative to the positive conception of the State. It is arguable, but by no means certain, that the radical wing of the Liberal party had been aiming at this transition before 1914. Now it was accepted by all parties. *Laissez-faire* was dead. The prosperity of the community was no longer the responsibility of the owners or controllers of property; it was the sole responsibility of the political

¹ Professor K. Feiling, *op. cit.*

classes. The vast new electorate could clearly no longer be regarded as the masters. Its members insensibly became the clients of the rival political caucuses. As the customer is always right, flattery, after 1918, displaced argument as the chief political weapon. It was in the new spirit that Mr. Lloyd George proposed to celebrate the victory of 1918 by making Britain a land fit for heroes to live in. The new electorate responded with alacrity to the new blarney. Mr. Asquith's Liberal following was reduced to twenty-six in number and Mr. Asquith himself was defeated; the Labour party returned only fifty-nine strong; the electorate returned 'the wealthiest, the least intelligent, and the least representative House of Commons since Waterloo.' The chief reason for this unbalancing of historic political forces was the suddenness of the reaction from the deep-seated pessimism general throughout the country until only a few weeks before the armistice. The sudden relief from the burden of personal anxiety which lay on almost every home (for in November 1918 the strength of the British armies had reached the staggering total of 193,102 officers and 5,144,841 other ranks) led to an upsurge of excited and unthinking optimism as to the prospects before us.

Manifestly, for the records of the election speeches leave the matter in no doubt, this optimism was shared, or at least proclaimed, by Mr. Lloyd George and his colleagues. 'The lights are going out all over Europe,' Sir Edward Grey had said on 4th August 1914; 'they will not be lit again in our time.' This memorable and tragically accurate prophecy, so often recalled in the last quarter of a century, was for a few weeks—perhaps indeed for a few months—forgotten. The mood was one of cheerful demoralization and unreasoning expectation of good things easy to come by.

It was in this mood that Mr. Lloyd George deliberately closed the doors not only on his old chief, to whose quixotic loyalty at the time of the Marconi scandal he owed his political life, but on the majority of his Liberal party. Every supporter of Mr. Asquith was opposed at the general election by a supporter of Mr. Lloyd George's coalition. The fruits of victory were not to be shared. As the election campaign proceeded, ministers were stampeded by public pressure, as they

conceived it, into all kinds of vindictive pledges and impossible promises about living conditions. Whether the men who made these promises were ignorant or deceitful must remain a matter of opinion, but the fact remained that, with the end of the war, the whole political and economic fabric of Europe had collapsed. Anarchy, unemployment, and starvation were rife and the effects of this disaster would not, and could not, be confined to the territories and peoples of our late enemies, nor should men of any political experience have imagined otherwise.

The crisis over demobilization provided the first shock to the new government. The band had ceased to play and Thomas Atkins was shivering forgotten in the stricken villages of France and Belgium. An ingenious civilian had planned his gradual return, in accordance with the requirements of trade. The British soldier, patient to the utmost extremes of privation in times of danger, was unwilling to be treated, after the unparalleled exertions of four years, as a counter in the bargainings of war profiteers. It was left to Mr. Winston Churchill, the one man of military genius among the allied politicians, who, now that the war was over, had at last been restored to a full place in the national councils, to save a dangerous situation verging on mutiny. He decided that those who had endured and suffered most should be first demobilized, and, having so decided, he saw that his decision was carried out. The English soldier knows justice when he sees it, the situation was relieved, and Mr. Winston Churchill reappeared in the forefront of the political stage. Not for many years afterwards did we learn that, while he was insisting on justice for his fellow soldiers, he was also fighting a lone hand in the Cabinet for justice to our late enemies, pleading for the relaxation of the blockade and for the vigorous revictualling and re-equipment of Germany. But 1919 was not the year of mercy and justice. It was the year of the Treaty of Versailles. Two men of honour had signed the armistice terms. Lord Wester Wemyss and Marshal Foch claimed a hearing before the assembled politicians and were contemptuously refused it. 'I want to discuss the question of peace,' Lord Wester Wemyss protested to President Wilson at Versailles. 'This is not the place,' the American president replied. Amid the popping of champagne corks and the

distribution of largesse, the pleas of soldiers and sailors, as of agonized mothers and starving children in Germany, fell on deaf ears. The allied blockade of Germany continued while the Peace Conference deliberated leisurely at Versailles.

Unfortunately, throughout 1919, the allied optimism was still almost undiluted. In none of the allied countries had the expected unemployment yet developed. Anxious to prevent the possibility of the returning armies achieving political power at his own expense, Mr. Lloyd George had arranged to soothe them with a liberal distribution of other people's cash and an avalanche of grandiloquent promises. Within less than nine months, however, of demobilization, virtually the whole four millions of the returned armies were absorbed in industry, despite the fact that the labour market had been swollen by the advent of several hundred thousand women and a large number of men not normally employed. Save for the actual months of demobilization, the total of the unemployed never exceeded 350,000 until the middle of 1920, and was often below 200,000, representing by far the lowest peace-time percentage of unemployment in the present century, until the generosity of the United States during Mr. Attlee's premiership led to the same splendid appearance of prosperity.

In 1919-20, as from 1945 to 1949, some of the employment was artificial: as late as the financial year 1920-21 the estimates for the Ministry of Munitions amounted to £65,000,000, and for the fifteen months before the expenditure was immensely higher. Railways and coal were subsidized and the earnings of shipowners and shipbuilders were beyond the dreamers of avarice. But, in 1919 as after 1945, the boom had some solid foundation. There was a genuine demand for capital and consumable goods all over the world, and some money was there to pay for them. What the wisdom of economists had failed to provide, the necessities of politicians had been compelled to invent—a method of distributing purchasing power. It was provided in all countries by a continuance of the war-time inflation no longer directed to the production of goods for destruction, but to the purchase of goods for consumption. For nearly two years the flow of production continued to be matched by an increasing demand. There was one marked difference between 1919 and

1945. In 1919 England got the lion's share of the spoil, for the whole world was then asking not for oil but for ships and coal. While the internal price of coal kept round about £2 per ton, the export price was for months in the neighbourhood of £5 per ton, and for a time reached the then fantastic figure of £5 15s. Nevertheless, the boom was a short-lived blessing, if indeed it was a blessing at all. It dimmed the eyes of the politicians to the gravity of the state of Europe and nourished the optimistic greed of the least deserving among all classes of the community. Above all, it gave birth to the mood of personal irresponsibility which became prevalent all over Europe in the first years of the peace.

The lasting evil of the First World War arose from its character as a 'civil war' within the framework of the old European order, and its really damaging effects were, as with all civil wars, moral. The citizens of all the Western European countries after 1918 suffered a loss of faith. They no longer believed in the mission and destiny of their traditional civilization and were therefore disinclined to effort or sacrifice. The result, once the boom was over, was a feverish search for security, for indemnities, for reparations, for a system of organization through which the nations of post-war Europe could secure, at someone else's expense, the benefits which they had come to claim as a right and had ceased to regard as the rewards of prudence, virtue, and thrift. It was the error both of 'Homes for Heroes' and 'Organization for Peace,' those two slogans which echoed through England from 1918 to 1931, that these desirable things were to be supplied to all who needed them by third parties—to the working man by the State, to the British people by the League of Nations. The same attitude of nerveless optimism was responsible for the grotesque and dishonourable demands made on Germany for reparations by all the signatories to the Treaty of Versailles. No one had the courage to place any limit to the day-dreams which kept them from contemplating the hard realities of a world at once tired, impoverished, and discontented.

The awakening was gradual. Many new eras were successfully announced before the depreciation of the political currency became noticeable. Even Mr. Lloyd George, the greatest

inflationist in the history of political optimism since Aurelian, remained in power as well as in office for four years after the peace. The basic evils of the inter-war international situation had, however, been written into the peace treaties and the League of Nations Covenant, and, once these were confirmed as the foundation of the public law of Europe, there was little or nothing to be done, within their framework, which could remedy a situation fraught with danger from the very first. The first of these evils was the substitution for the long-established principle of nationality of a narrow racialism. The second evil was the failure—rendered all the more disastrous by the ill-chosen racial basis of the new order—to make the League of Nations an effective agent of peaceful change. For both these evils the liberal belief in the natural wisdom and virtue of man was at bottom responsible. No free self-governing people unhampered by racial minorities or problems of irredentism could ever desire war. In a world, therefore, of self-determined democracies war would cease. It was on this theory that Europe was balkanized and Germany compulsorily democratized as part of the post-war settlement. The theory was, in fact, plain nonsense, flying in the face of every lesson of history, to say nothing of every precept of Christian teaching. Wars arise, as General Smuts had occasion to warn the world in 1926, out of intolerable situations, and it is the folly and wickedness of man which create them. The greater men's freedom of choice and action the weaker the restraints on their self-will and self-expression and the greater, not the less, the risks of war. The price of liberty therefore was eternal vigilance. The only civilization which never knew peace even for a decade was the civilization of the Greek world of city states where the principle of self-determination had been carried to its logical conclusion.

Nevertheless, the Liberal philosophy, which had been widely held since the end of the eighteenth century, would not by itself have been fatal to the Liberal experiment of 1918. What was fatal was the attempt to give it political and institutional expression. The old order had represented a series of subtle compromises between the claims of race, the needs of government, and the military conditions of a stable order. Each political unit, be it nation-state, federation, dual monarchy, or

empire, must, if there is to be a chance of enduring peace, be economically viable, politically stable, and militarily defensible. The formula required delicate and subtle compromises at every point and no possible settlement could have been perfect. The Versailles settlement had, however, the unique peculiarity of being necessarily wrong at every point because it was based on a wrong principle. The frontiers of the new Poland, obviously the most vulnerable of all the new states, were strategically indefensible. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was split up into a number of states, none of which was economically viable. The Baltic republics existed from the very start purely by grace of Russia. Germany was left intentionally without a frontier, with her territory cut in two by the Polish Corridor, with a large group of her population on the wrong side of the Czechoslovakian frontier, and crippled by an undisclosed liability for reparations. Germany herself, perhaps, suffered no injustice by this treatment, but the rest of the world did, and will continue to do so for many generations. By rendering Germany permanently unstable politically, we destroyed the possibility of peace for the rest of Europe. We also placed the whole world on the horns of a dilemma. By the balkanization of Southern and Eastern Europe we created a situation in which a stable regime, if it ever arose in Germany, would find no effective barrier to German expansion either south or east. If, on the other hand, Germany remained disorganized, discontented and impoverished, there could be no effective European recovery. Meanwhile, the French frontier remained as vulnerable in 1919 as it had been four years before.

The gravely mistaken effort to construct a new Europe in defiance of history, geography, and economics, was justified, in the view of the authors of the Versailles Treaty by the device of tacking the peace treaties on to the new League of Nations and looking to the machinery of the League instead of the balance of power to preserve peace and to rectify anomalies or injustices as they arose or were disclosed. The irresponsibility thus actually imposed on the great powers might perhaps in any case have been fatal to the restoration of order in the world, but the failure of the experiment was made certain by major and irreparable mistakes in the drafting of the League Covenant.

The new boundaries were to accord strictly with racial claims and the new treaties were not to be upset by force however great the anomalies which might result from the new principles imported into them. Nevertheless, neither the British Foreign Office nor President Wilson, nor, for that matter, the Italian delegation, was so foolish as to imagine that a series of unalterable treaties could be drawn up. Obviously some changes would be necessitated, if not by reason of the imperfections of the treaties, then, at any rate, because of changing circumstances. How was the League to be made an instrument of peaceful change? Here was the crucial debate. It was here that the dragons' teeth were sown.

The official British view was what has been called The Hague view, because it wished to make the League a kind of permanent Hague Conference for the settlement by discussion of all disputes between its members. It accorded with the British view that the League Covenant did not make war a crime. It actually legalized it in certain conditions. It was designed to ensure a prolonged period of negotiation, an award by the powers, and the mobilization of public opinion all over the world in favour of that award. The award might be accepted by both parties or rejected by both parties. In the first case peace, and in the second war, was the accepted consequence. In the most likely case, of the award being accepted by one party and rejected by the other, there was nothing in the Covenant to prevent the recalcitrant state declaring war after a short interval had elapsed, although the other members of the League were prohibited from coming to its assistance. The British Foreign Office in fact envisaged the League as a permanent institution of the nineteenth-century concert of Europe, a collection of sovereign states in permanent association for the preservation of peace.

Arguments in defence of this view of the League were marshalled in a brilliant Foreign Office memorandum prepared by Sir Eyre Crowe for the Peace Conference. All the major difficulties in morals and in law which arose and which ultimately wrecked the League were foreseen in this memorandum. In the very first paragraph a fundamental issue, which, even to-day, still remains to be faced, is clearly defined. The League

was intended as an association of sovereign states, and of democratic states at that. A system of permanent engagements of a practical character was, it was pointed out, clearly inconsistent not with the principle of sovereignty (for a sovereign can abdicate) but with the principle of democracy. The essence of democracy is that a people can change its mind. For this reason the memorandum suggested that while the acceptance of the machinery proposed for the settlement of disputes should be a permanent engagement, specific engagements defining not the manner but the matter of agreements between powers should be uniformly short-dated, or subject to periodic renewal with the free right of amendment.

A sufficient commentary on the wisdom of this proposal is the sequel to its rejection. On the one hand the unsatisfied states, Poland first, then Germany, Italy, and Japan, claimed the right to tear up treaties at will; then by way of reply Sir John Simon, as he then was, formulated in 1935 the equally impossible doctrine that treaties could not be unilaterally denounced. This high-sounding principle meant nothing less in practice than that a treaty negotiated by one transient politician with another was permanently binding on all future generations of mankind unless and until not only the party which was aggrieved by the treaty but the party which profited by it should agree together to end it. Of the two doctrines, the British is undoubtedly the less objectionable, but once treaties are elevated to the status of the public law of civilized society as a whole, it is obvious that without machinery for unilateral denunciation civilized society will, in time, be bereft of public law and will degenerate into gangsterism. This inevitable consequence could have been obviated only by the methods advocated in the Foreign Office memorandum, or by the more ambitious American and Italian proposals for something near to an international legislature.

Two principles, wholly distinct from the British draft, did, indeed, find their way into the Covenant from America but both in an ineffective form. The first was the principle of the 'hue and cry' to be raised against war makers, and the second the principle of the guarantee against all-comers of the territorial integrity and political independence of the members of

the League. The first principle was imported from the pioneering traditions of America; the second from the Monroe Doctrine.

Professor L. B. Namier has pointed out one insuperable objection to the principle of the hue and cry. In international affairs those who are interested are not impartial, and those who are impartial are not interested. The military objection to the principle was, however, even stronger. The essence of the 'hue and cry' in primitive communities was the powerlessness of the individual aggressor, once all the other individuals in the community were ranged against him. A strongly armed centralized power with a modern army and air force cannot be similarly coerced by any *levée en masse* against him. To wage war against any great power with any hope of success there must be detailed preparations. The international force must have a base; it must have behind it an immense factory organization, a transport system, control of sea and land communications, a prearranged policy, a unified politico-military command, and all its units must be uniformly armed and equipped. The organization of world war and the preservation of world peace is not, moreover, the same thing, but two different things. In any case, the whole burden of an international war would have fallen upon the states bordering on the aggressor state, and so far from the hue and cry spelling salvation for them it would spell ruin.

No doubt these fears were in the minds of the peacemakers when they drafted Article XI of the Covenant. It might have been drafted by the Mothers' Union or the Committee of the National Liberal Club. 'And the League shall take any action which may be deemed wise or effectual to safeguard the peace of nations!' Unfortunately all that this ingenious piece of draftmanship achieved was to raise the whirlwind without providing the means for riding it out. Impending or present war was to be everybody's concern. As amended by the Peace Conference, the 'hue and cry' clause became a meaningless and dangerous sham.

A less ridiculous but far more unfortunate fate befell the second of President Wilson's key contributions to the Covenant, the famous Article X intended to guarantee the territorial

integrity and political independence of the member states. This article as originally drafted would probably have altered the course of history, would possibly have saved the League, and would certainly have averted the catastrophe of 1939. The point is of such historical importance that the two drafts, the first by the American jurists and the second as finally adopted, must be set out side by side.

Article X as drafted by Colonel House:

The Contracting Powers unite in several guarantees to each other of their territorial integrity and political independence subject, however, to such territorial modifications, if any, as may become necessary in the future by reason of changes in present racial conditions and aspirations pursuant to the principles of self-determination, and as shall also be regarded by three-fourths of the Delegates as necessary and proper for the welfare of the peoples concerned; recognizing also that all territorial changes involve Equitable Compensation and that the peace of the world is superior in importance and interest to questions of boundary.

Article X as adopted:

The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and political independence of all members of the League. In case of any aggression or in case of any threat of danger of such aggression, the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled.

Here was a clash between the United States, France, and Great Britain, the consequences of which were fatal. The clash between Great Britain and the U.S.A. was over methods. Neither Great Britain nor the United States wished to guarantee the territorial *status quo* in perpetuity. The British view was that it was futile to hope to get agreement in advance on the principles which should be applied to periodical readjustments of territory between states. These things should be left to *ad hoc* bodies to decide. All that was needed was to ensure delay while impartial experts prepared their recommendations and world public opinion could be mobilized in favour of peaceful settlement. Inspired, however, by the example of the American supreme court, President Wilson saw the appropriate League tribunal delivering a series of conscientious judgments out of which would grow up a code of law governing the readjustments of national boundaries. This vision inspired the French with

nothing short of horror. For them the very purpose of the Covenant was to make the peace treaties the foundation of the public law of Europe. To meet British objections to the explicit undertaking to preserve frontiers against aggression the French representatives argued that the first sentences of the present article, which began its life as the French alternative draft, 'merely imported a principle.' They therefore added to it another sentence (the present second sentence of Article XI), specifying how effect should be given to this principle. They further agreed to substitute for the word 'guarantee' in their own draft the juridically meaningless word 'respect.' The second part of the clause left it in effect for each separate government to do what it liked about applying the principle. But the French version of the second sentence of the clause is radically different from the British. The French version required not that the Council should 'advise upon' but that it should *aviser* (see to) the plans and disposition necessary.

The English text was the binding text for Great Britain and, having secured the substitution of the pious 'respect' for the binding 'guarantee' in the first sentence, and, by a mistranslation, an emasculated version of the second sentence, Lord Robert Cecil¹ may have flattered himself that he had got as much as it was reasonable to expect. What he had in fact done was to put an obstacle, which may, legally speaking, have been surmountable but which was politically to prove insuperable, in the way of treaty revision by agreement. There the clause stood for laymen, not lawyers, to read. Of the millions who have read it since, hardly one realized and no one cared that, in the technical language of nineteenth-century diplomacy, 'an undertaking to respect' is vastly different from a guarantee, that it implied a purely political understanding variable in changed circumstances as opposed to an undertaking binding irrespective of changed circumstances. Still less did any one realize, what was so clear to the eminent lawyers and diplomats concerned in the drafting of the article, that the presence of the second sentence, requiring the League to advise upon the means for fulfilling the obligation undertaken in the first sentence, meant to a lawyer that the obligation was essentially

¹ Lord Cecil of Chelwood.

a qualified obligation, not necessarily to be pushed to the point of war.

The British Government thus became in the eyes of its nationals committed to something exactly the opposite of what was intended, to the guaranteeing of the new treaty frontiers as an obligation binding in morals under an instrument which contained no provision whatever for any compulsory arbitration on frontier disputes or for enforcing transfers of territory, however overwhelming the case.

In Articles X and XI lies, barely concealed, the dynamite which was to blow up the entire structure of the League and with it the passionate hopes of an entire generation. Probably the correct conclusion is that Article XI should have been wholly omitted and that the first draft of Article X should have been incorporated. In that case, sanctions and other penalties would have been directed against those who wished to resist just and necessary changes instead of, as it happened, against those who desired and needed them.

In refusing serious consideration to this American idea, the British and French ran counter not only to President Wilson's intention but to the Italian proposals, which, like the American, would have set up a permanent body for deciding all issues that might arise on grounds of equity and political expediency. The whole League was to be compelled to apply sanctions (no fewer than seventeen varieties being enumerated) against any nation or nations refusing to accept the award. The statesmen of Versailles, in seeking to find a *via media* between the limited and effective diplomacy of the nineteenth-century tradition (as proposed to be improved in the British Foreign Office memorandum) and the bold and revolutionary proposals of the American and Italian lawyers, led the world unwittingly, but swiftly for all that, to disaster. Once the western world adopted the position that the Versailles Treaties were sacrosanct until amended by universal consent, a situation had been created which must lead inevitably to war sooner or later; the more unworkable the treaties, the sooner the catastrophe must take place.

It was perhaps unfortunate that the chaos created by the war was so deep and widespread that the attention of statesmen all

over the world was concentrated for the first few years after the victory on a whole series of emergencies not directly affecting the structure of the peace treaties. The long-term problems of treaty revision were thus by the unspoken consent of all the powers put on one side. Time was to make them increasingly intractable.

The Versailles Treaty with Germany and the American Treaty of Guarantee with France—a concession for the refusal to allow France the Rhine frontier—were signed on 28th June 1919. The Treaty of St. Germain with Austria was signed on 10th September and the Treaty of Neuilly with Bulgaria on 27th November. The Versailles Treaty was ratified by Germany and came into force on 10th January 1920; in June 1920 the Treaty of Trianon was signed with Hungary. Throughout all these months, however, the situation in Eastern Europe and in the East remained fluid and for several years it almost monopolized the attention of the great powers. Then, as to-day, Russia was the disturbing factor. The British continued until late in 1919 in active support of various counter-revolutionary forces operating in North Russia, in the Crimea, and in Eastern Siberia. At the same time we were fighting Afghanistan from May to August 1919, a war in which very large forces were engaged. In April 1920 the Poles undertook an offensive of their own against Russia. Two months later the Greeks took the offensive against the Turks in Asia Minor, while the French moved against the Arabs in Syria (over which they claimed a protectorate) in July of that year. Turkey was on the verge of revolution, and the sultan's tottering government, threatened on its flank by Mustapha Kemal, signed the abortive Treaty of Sèvres with the allies in August 1920. Meanwhile the Russians were at the gates of Warsaw. The surprising defeat of the Russian armies by the Poles, assisted by General Weygand, relieved the immediate crisis, but not until 18th March 1921 was the Polish eastern frontier settled by the Treaty of Riga.

Had Western Europe been peaceful, prosperous, and secure, these continuous conflicts in the east would have been enough to create a situation which the statesmen of any earlier generation would have regarded with great alarm. It was one of the

tragedies, perhaps the main tragedy, of the inter-war period that no statesmen, even if they had the ability and the experience (and most of the post-war statesmen were exceptionally inexperienced), had the time, the prestige, or the power to deal with so many international problems simultaneously. The United States, which alone might have been able to do so, by virtue of its disinterestedness, its great wealth, its still undisturbed economy, and its still unimpaired military power, had in November 1919 made the fatal decision to reject the peace treaties and to repudiate the guarantee to France. Mr. Lloyd George alone remained to speak with authority, but by the end of 1920 he could no longer speak with force, or with the support of a united country.

It was inevitable, after the temporary boom of 1919-20, that we, as the one great free-trade country, should be the principal sufferers from the world chaos. By February 1921 the unemployed were over a million and before the end of the year they had reached the staggering total of 2,038,000. The reaction from the hysterical optimism of the 1918 election had begun earlier, when it became evident that the war to end war had left most of the world in the throes of a continuing conflict of great armies. The reaction reached a climax with the great deflation of 1920-21 and the resulting unemployment. The public temper was not rendered more sympathetic to Mr. Lloyd George's administration by the conduct of affairs in Ireland where the Sinn Fein rebellion had come to a head in 1920 and the British Government had taken the desperate decision to engage themselves in a guerrilla warfare with the rebels. A special force of the 'commando' type had been recruited for this purpose, and the press and propaganda departments of the Sinn Fein rebels and of Dublin Castle poured out competitive stories of outrage and arson, most of which, unfortunately, were true. Nor was Ireland the only storm centre in the British Empire. There was widespread unrest in India, and the British Government had thought it necessary to introduce a sweeping measure of constitutional reform which, since it conceded the form and withheld the substance of self-government, weakened our authority without adding either to our prestige or our popularity.

The lack of realism with which Mr. Lloyd George had approached the British economic problem was reflected also in his approach to what became for some years the central problem of Anglo-French relations with Germany, the problem of reparations. In December 1920 the Brussels Conference fixed the total of reparations due from Germany at £12,412,000,000 to be paid within forty-two years. This absurdity prejudiced the whole course of the relations between Germany and the western powers. Although the amount was reduced in April 1921 by the Reparations Commission to £6,600,000,000, a figure which Germany was compelled by a six-day ultimatum to accept as her indebtedness, the German people were given ground, and most foolishly, for believing, as they wished to believe, that they had been tricked by the allies. The sequel was a steady depreciation of the German mark, which fell to 820 to the £ in November 1921, to over 1,500 in March 1922, to over 2,700 in July 1922, to over 3,700 in August 1922, and to nearly 12,000 in October 1922. A series of conferences at Cannes, at Genoa, at The Hague, and at London discussed the problem of Europe's economic recovery with a lack of realism which drove Germany at each stage nearer to the inevitable breakdown. The world was suffering for the first, but not, unfortunately, for the last, time from the conduct of its affairs by men eminently capable of conducting them if only they had known the purpose for which they were doing so. If you begin a war properly, and, indeed, justly, according to the morality of politics, in order to impose your will on a country proposing to act unjustly, and if you continue the war until that power is so wholly defeated as to be incapable of action, you cannot impose your will. You must first restore your adversary. We had, by our military defeats, our blockade, continued for months after the armistice, and our political action as expressed in the peace treaties, destroyed the economy of Central Europe. Then by our reparation policy we had vetoed recovery. Now we were trying to extract from Germany vast payments in cash and kind and, as the price of our efforts, were not imposing our will on Germany but swiftly rebuilding Germany's will to destroy the western powers. We were thus re-creating the situation which we had fought the First World War to destroy.

That was the sum, as the British people saw it at the time, and as history has seen it since, of Mr. Lloyd George's Western European policies. His Irish policy had already ended, as Lord Carson bluntly observed in the House of Lords, in his 'surrender at the point of a revolver.' His reconstruction policy had ended with 2,000,000 unemployed. In August 1922 his pro-Greek policy, which had given Smyrna for five years to our rather unwilling allies, also collapsed. The Turks, led by Mustapha Kemal, drove the Greeks out of Asia Minor and invaded the neutral zone of the Dardanelles. Mustapha Kemal had been an eye-witness of the evacuation of Gallipoli. When, in defiance of Great Britain and France he entered the neutral zone in September 1922, it was with no intention of evacuating it. And so we come to October 1922, a month which notably foreshadowed the shape of things to come but also registered a great and pregnant change in the existing balance of forces in Europe.

In October 1922 three things happened. Our French-Italian allies deserted us at Chanak;¹ the dominions also refused to support our stand against Mustapha Kemal, with whom we were forced to negotiate and almost immediately to make peace on his own terms. In this nadir of Britain's fortunes, Mr. Lloyd George was driven from office by the rising indignation of the Conservative party. At the same time the last of the historic succession of Turkish sultans was driven from his throne and Turkey became the second of the dictatorships which were soon to dominate Europe. The third of the dictators was close at his heels. On 31st October the King of Italy called on Mussolini, who had just arrived in Rome at the head of his Fascist militia, to form a government. The rise to supreme power of these two men of limitless energy, audacity, and ambition was contemporaneous with the appointment as Prime Minister of Great Britain of a dying man, Mr. Andrew Bonar Law. He succeeded to an unpleasant heritage but secured the suffrage of the British people on his programme of tranquillity. Mr. Lloyd George, after having for six years enjoyed greater personal power than any statesman in our history, fell from office, never to return.

¹ Where the British and Turkish forces faced each other.

It is hard even at this date to appraise fairly the services of this remarkable man. He must bear the chief burden of guilt, if guilt it be, for the destruction of the Liberal party. He must share some part of the blame for the failure to end the war in 1917 when Austria was ready to sign a separate peace on terms agreeable to us and consonant with our war aims. He was a major influence at Versailles. His domestic policy between 1919 and 1923 was disastrous. He encouraged an immense inflation and turned with such suddenness to the opposite policy that our economy never wholly recovered from it. Most important of all, he had initiated the policy which, from the end of the temporary boom created by the post-war demand for consumption goods, was directed, until the crisis of 1931, to re-establishing the gold value of our currency and regaining for the City of London the position of world money-lender-in-chief. It was with this end in view (though the desire to reduce the sterling burden of our debt to the United States by pushing up the gold value of the £ was a powerful auxiliary) that Mr. Lloyd George had deliberately intensified an inevitable slump by raising the bank rate in April 1920 to 7 per cent. The fall in prices dated from that month. The decision to assist the fall (which must, in any case, have been considerable) was definite and clear-cut. It was all the more astonishing in view of the size of the post-war National Debt. The year 1920 found us with a six-shilling income tax, £7,000,000,000 of debt, and an annual budget of over £1,000,000,000, but it also found us with a price level, before the disastrous beginning of deflation, of more than three times that of 1914. If the situation had been allowed to adjust itself prices would probably have remained at least at double the pre-war level, at which figure the interest charges on the National Debt and the consequentially increased burden of rates and taxes would have been far more supportable.

The index figure of gold prices in 1919 was approximately 170; that of sterling prices was, at one time, as high as 350. In the alleged interests of the money market we embarked on a policy which meant, if industry and the State were to meet their prior charges at the new price level, a dramatic reduction of government expenditure and a speedy fall in the rate of interest. As our reward, presumably, we were once again to

become buyers of cheap food and exporters of cheap manufactured goods to a world assumed to be no more capable economically or desirous politically of establishing its own manufactures than the world of 1900-14. But Mr. Lloyd George, while taking the advice of the most ultra-conservative of the bankers and ignoring that of Mr. J. M. Keynes and Mr. Reginald McKenna, had remained a radical politician. He had passed the Rent Restriction Acts which made the building of unsubsidized houses impossible owing to the costs of building, and he had come near to promising work or maintenance for the unemployed. Social service benefits had been increased; vast sums had been spent on new roads and new schools. The country was thus left, on his resignation, with two incompatible policies—high wages, a high rate of government expenditure, a great expansion of social services, and a low price level.

Yet almost all who sat in Cabinets with him acknowledged Mr. Lloyd George their master and regarded him more than highly. Nor can we resolve the dilemma by saying that we have the familiar spectacle of a great war minister who failed as a peace-time administrator. The same major doubts are suggested by his conduct of the war as by his conduct after it. We can only conclude, and most certainly so when we contrast Mr. Lloyd George's war leadership with that of Mr. Winston Churchill, that his pre-eminence was due to the absence of any men of really high calibre among those who might, in the political circumstances of the time, have taken his place. He had, to a quite exceptional degree, drive and personal dominance. No one was more feared. No one could tackle with greater energy or success the emergency of the moment. His greatest single service, probably, was his insistence on the adoption of convoys as the only practical answer to the German submarine campaign. Because of his personal dominance, no other man, it seems, could have kept together and energized the administration which, by the dictates of circumstances, held office from 1916 until the end of the war. His triumphant career has left, none the less, a lamentable mark in the world's history. If, without him, we should have lost the war, which it is hard to believe but which has been said by many very well qualified to speak, it remains a great misfortune that this great

service had to be rendered by one who was *au fond* only a supremely agile politician with few of the gifts required to solve the deeper problems either of war or peace.

With Mr. Bonar Law, the Conservatives returned to power as well as public office for the first time since 1905. They were at once confronted with the issue of unemployment, a problem which was to dominate the political scene for a generation to come. At this point, and particularly as it is still a matter of public controversy, it is proper to consider in some detail both the nature and the responsibility for this tragic feature of our society between the wars.

Unemployment reached its first peak under Mr. Lloyd George and as the direct, if not intended, result of the deflation of 1920-21 which crippled our export trade. Deflation, however, coincided with the end of the sellers' market which inevitably followed the war, and it is wrong to suppose that a wiser monetary policy would have done more than mitigate unemployment, which was due to a number of different causes perfectly well known to students of elementary economics.

It must first be noted that the average rate of unemployment before 1914 was something usually under 5 per cent of the working population, which may be taken as below rather than above 500,000. This percentage probably holds good from the time of James I onwards, and at all times up to 1919 was mainly made up of those temporarily unemployed, either because of normal changes of employment or occupation or because of variations in consumers' demands, new inventions, seasonal fluctuations, or an interruption in the supply of the necessary power or raw materials for a particular industry. Throughout history there have been exceptional periods of unemployment when the figure has risen from 5 per cent to 10 per cent or thereabouts in certain industries. All that happened in the inter-war period was that in addition to the normal account of temporary unemployment—which exists to-day—as I write, in the sixth year of Mr. Attlee's 'full employment' policy, there are nearly 400,000 registered as unemployed—what had been the three major British export industries, coal-mining, textiles, and iron and steel, with the ancillary ship-building industry, suffered disastrous blows as the result of

external causes which were the responsibility of no government or political party. In the coal industry the labour demand fell by a third (by no less, that is, than 400,000), partly as the result of the increasing use of oil but mainly of the development during the 1914-18 war of coal-mining abroad. In the case of the textile industry, the growth of the Indian cotton industry under the protection of a new tariff ($3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in 1914; 25 per cent in 1933) deprived Lancashire of its largest customer, while the expansion of Japan's export industry challenged us in other markets. As the result, the number of workers in 1927, as compared with 1914, was 200,000 less. Iron and steel and shipbuilding suffered similarly from a great expansion of production in other countries, due to the needs of defence during the war and due to our own inability during the same period to modernize our plant or concentrate on the export market. Finally, as the result of the submarine war, the United Kingdom, at the end of the war, owned only one-quarter, instead of two-fifths, of the world's shipping, and the work of our repair shops and construction yards was in time correspondingly reduced.

Apart from the exceptional, temporary unemployment caused by Mr. Lloyd George's deflation (when unemployment amounted to 16 per cent of insured workers), unemployment down to the thirties averaged 11 per cent, that is, roughly 1,250,000. When we realize that over 750,000 of this figure are accounted for by the reduced demand for British coal, textiles, iron and steel, and shipbuilding, in each case as the direct result of the war, we realize at the same time that the number temporarily unemployed was, if anything, less, and certainly less proportionately than in times past. It is the exact reverse of the truth to say either that unemployment at the rate that prevailed up to the thirties was the normal amount under the capitalist system, or that the normal amount under the capitalist system was at all substantially higher than that under the present socialistic system, or that any political party, or any political policy, was responsible for the catastrophic decline, as the result of the 1914 war, in the demand for British exports of coal, textiles, iron, steel, and ships. A further factor which delayed and permanently impaired our recovery was,

however, the sole responsibility of Mr. Lloyd George's administration, namely, the failure to settle, while the political climate made it possible to settle, the problem of war debts and reparations. The mass of bad 'political' money representing nothing but political claims of no economic relevance disorganized the whole system of international trade, and the United States made confusion worse confounded, later in the twenties, by large 'political' loans to Germany and Austria which were spent not on capital equipment for the production of goods available for exchange but on public works and roads. The consequence was that there was little real economic demand for our goods. The demand was conditioned by political decisions or military events, new loans, new concessions, the cessation of coal-mining in Poland or the occupation of the Ruhr mines by France. With vast but undetermined liabilities overhanging every nation, including the victors—our own precipitate devaluation was really undertaken in the mistaken hope of easing the burden of our American debt—there could be no stability of demand and therefore no equation of supply. Nor, in a world of 'phoney' money, could the price mechanism work.

The sum of these conditions clearly demanded the recasting of our economy. So far from the Conservative party being responsible for the failure to do this, they were the only party which made the attempt.

Mr. Bonar Law had resigned after a few months of office and was succeeded by Mr. Stanley Baldwin, who had led the revolt of junior ministers which caused Mr. Lloyd George's resignation and had been appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer in Mr. Bonar Law's government. Mr. Baldwin was virtually unknown to the public when he became Chancellor and was hardly better known when he formed his first administration in 1923. He soon became, and was destined to remain until his resignation in 1937, the most influential personality in English politics. He showed his independence and his intention to rule when he committed himself, in defiance of Mr. Bonar Law's pledges, to the introduction of a protective tariff. He did so, it is said, without realizing that in the circumstances the decision made it necessary for him to ask for a dissolution and seek a mandate for the new policy. As we know, the two free-trade

parties, the Liberal party superficially reunited under Mr. Asquith, and the Labour party now under Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, won a decisive victory over Mr. Baldwin at the election of December 1923. In the new Parliament these parties combined to defeat the Conservative Government, and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald became the first Labour Prime Minister. After a few uneasy months his government was defeated by a combination of Conservatives and Liberals, and at the ensuing election in October 1924 Mr. Baldwin won a great victory. He had, however, pledged himself not to introduce a protective tariff, on the ground that the country had voted against it less than a year before at an election held on this specific issue.

In normal conditions Mr. Baldwin's decision would have been constitutionally correct. But were conditions normal with over a million and a quarter of unemployed for more than three years? Up to the date of Mr. Baldwin's second administration the Conservative party had no responsibility as a party for the tragedy of unemployment and had the credit of being the only party which had proposed a remedy and asked the country for a mandate to apply it. The only shadow of foundation for the charge that the Conservative party was responsible for the inter-war unemployment lies in their abandonment of the tariff policy in the face of the Liberal and Labour parties' opposition. The abandonment was doubly underlined when Mr. Baldwin asked Mr. Winston Churchill, who had stood in the December 1923 election as a free-trade Liberal, to join his administration as Chancellor of the Exchequer. As an alternative to the tariff policy, Mr. Baldwin and his colleagues decided to initiate what is now known as the welfare state, a decision which may justly be described as an attempt to palliate conditions which could not in the circumstances be cured. Neither decision can be regarded as fortunate for the country, but in relation to current controversies it must be noted that both were non-partisan decisions warmly endorsed by the Liberal and Labour parties who were responsible for rejecting the tariff and were so strongly in favour of the welfare state that they have since come to believe that they themselves initiated it.

Not every one, of course, would agree that Mr. Baldwin had been right in 1923 about tariffs and imperial preference, but

right or wrong, Mr. Baldwin thought that he was right, and, so thinking (if he was intellectually convinced of the need for a tariff policy), he should have stood by his policy. There was, indeed, lurking in Mr. Baldwin's decision of 1924 the germ of a new and dangerous constitutional doctrine, derived beyond a doubt from the fear of the vast new electorate, that the duty of government is to reflect the majority opinion, and that the proper course before an election is to put forward the programme which contains the largest measure of prudence and common sense consistent with a reasonable chance of obtaining a majority. Such a doctrine implies that the electorate can confer a 'mandate' and that a government has not only the right but the duty to act upon it. This highly contentious doctrine in turn tends to transform the House of Commons from a sovereign assembly into an assembly of delegates and to reduce the cabinet from the high estate of Ministers of the Crown to the lowly rank of the hired servants of a caucus. We shall see that this view of the constitution and of the relationship between the king's ministers and the electorate was to gain ground and lead the country into grave difficulties in 1931 and again in 1935.

The fear of the electorate was in part the reflection of the professionalization of politics and of the high taxation which made the cost of a political career extremely onerous and the rewards disproportionately small. Mainly it was due to the fact that just when, for the first time in British parliamentary history since the reign of Queen Anne, really fundamental issues divided the government from the opposition, British statesmen had to face an immense new electorate of twenty millions without the party machinery necessary to bring the real issues home to the nation as a whole. The first of these issues, in 1925, was Socialism itself, the second the Socialists' approach to the pressing international problems.

The fundamental difference in regard to Socialism needs no elaboration. Socialism can be, as Mr. Ramsay Macdonald wished it to be, introduced gradually, but each step is by its nature irreversible. It is, therefore, none the less a revolutionary measure for being introduced by stages. The fundamental differences between the British left- and right-wing parties

over foreign policy between the wars were more subtle. They were violently felt and experienced and their existence was one of the contributory causes of the disasters of 1938 and 1939, but it is exceedingly difficult to define their causes in general terms. Perhaps one difference can be fairly suggested by quoting Mr. Ramsay Macdonald's statement to the fifth assembly of the League in 1924: 'Our interests for peace are far greater than our interests in creating a machinery of defence; a machinery of defence is easy to create, but beware lest in creating it you destroy the chances of peace.' If that doctrine meant only that the object of a defence machinery is the preservation of peace, no one could have objected to it. But it was held to imply, and no doubt did, a belief to which not even the most Liberal-minded Conservative could ever subscribe, that the existence of a formula for negotiations and arbitration rendered national armaments superfluous. Another and equally fundamental difference lay in the attitude of the two parties to Russia, in particular, and to the revolution in general. Long before 1925 the British Government had abandoned all idea of intervening in Russia's internal affairs, but revolution *per se* represented to the Conservatives, and still does, a dangerous solvent of international order and economic recovery, and they accordingly viewed Russia from the outset with much of the distrust with which the whole world views her to-day.

At this point the student of politics must be warned against two equally foolish but very popular beliefs. In Conservative circles it is too often supposed that because the Socialist party, all through the inter-war period and indeed up to 1946, were anxious for closer relations with Russia, they must themselves be secret supporters of revolution. Socialists, on the other hand, have never hesitated to suggest that the Conservative objection to the philosophy and the practice of revolution derives solely from a desire to keep their private fortunes intact. As with all mass conviction, a great deal of the feeling 'for' or 'against' Russia in the inter-war period was sentimental, but the rival sentiments, however foolish, were honourable, not selfish. On the one hand was the abhorrence of change effected by violence, on the other the belief that all change always works out somehow for good. There was, moreover, a deep and

important difference underlying the sentiment and the prejudice on both sides. The one side believed, even if it did not know it, in the traditional Christian doctrine of original sin. It believed, therefore, with John Morley, that politics was the science of the second-best. The other side believed in the natural wisdom and goodness of man. The first belief was to lead Europe to Munich; the second was to lead the world to Yalta. The cardinal difference between the two advances is that one is, by reason of its origins, slow, cautious and reversible, the other blind, trusting, and potentially catastrophic in its effects.

It is against the background of these fundamental differences of creed and temperament rather than under the influence of the more fashionable polemical views of the inherent vices of Conservatives or Labour-Socialists that we should consider the political history of the period from 1925 to our own times. January 1925 marks fairly clearly the end of the immediate post-war confusion. By that date there was at least a marked improvement in the general political and economic situation in Europe. The reparations problem had been partially solved by the Dawes scheme; the German currency was on the way to being re-established (albeit at the cost of the ruin of the German middle classes for which the world was to pay very dearly); the eastern frontiers were at last more or less stabilized; a treaty had been signed with a stable government in Turkey; the French had withdrawn from the Ruhr which they had occupied on the plea of a default by the Germans over reparations in January 1923 (during their occupation the mark had fallen to 15,000,000 to the £); there were faint signs of a revival of international trade. The debate at Geneva between the apostles of sanctions and the apostles of disarmament was, however, still in progress; the French were the champions of a new draft instrument, the Geneva protocol, which proposed in effect a system of guarantees, backed by sanctions, for the enforcement of the unchanged provisions of the different peace treaties; the British dominions, members of the League of Nations in their own right, refused to support such a system and Mr. Baldwin's government were thus forced, almost as soon as they had taken office, to decide against the protocol. Without

some international guarantees the French would not disarm; without disarmament Germany's rearmament could not be indefinitely forbidden. So the problem presented itself to all parties in Britain in 1925.

The world was now, for the first time, face to face with the real defect of the 1918 settlement. The succession states to the Austro-Hungarian Empire were so economically weak and so strategically indefensible that a rearmed Germany would dominate the Central European plain. It was, however, plainly incompatible with the ideals of the League to keep Germany permanently in tutelage to the military forces of their late enemies. Mr. Baldwin and the new British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, found an imagined solution in the Locarno Treaties whereby Belgium, France, and Germany were to be guaranteed against aggression from one another by Great Britain and Italy, and as a reward for such an engagement voluntarily entered into, Germany was to be admitted to the League of Nations and to join in the disarmament negotiations as a free and equal party. The Locarno Treaties were signed in London amid great rejoicing, but what was much more significant than the guarantees offered to France and Belgium (for that was really the sum of the matter) by Great Britain and Italy was the tacit refusal of either country to guarantee the other territorial provisions of the peace treaties. If there had been a general will to disarmament, Locarno might, indeed, have been the starting point of a return to peaceful conditions, but disarmament was, in fact, a futile conception on a continent dominated in the east by Russia (whose vast armaments continued to grow and who was not even a member of the League) and in the west by France (who had no intention of agreeing to any disarmament proposals which did not leave her the unchallenged military predominance west of the Vistula). Germany, Italy, Poland, and Czechoslovakia were not going, in the circumstances, to disarm voluntarily and there was no machinery for coercion, nor any will to coerce. In Great Britain alone disarmament proceeded steadily, but this only served to increase the nervousness of France while exciting the hopes of the enemies of the treaties elsewhere. It would be wrong to condemn the Locarno Treaties. They created a far

more friendly atmosphere in Western Europe and, had any statesman of the period been in a position to profit by it, history would no doubt note these treaties as a memorable step towards the re-establishment of peace. The diplomacy of the twenties and thirties was, however, as sterile and irrelevant as the violent controversies to which it gave rise and which still influence political tempers all over the world.

What was the problem which confronted Europe in 1925? It was the failure to ask this question, not the failure to answer it, which led to the catastrophe. There were three alternative possibilities: to defend the *status quo* by force, to modify it by consent, or to modify it by force. The western world went down in ruins not because it made the wrong choice between these alternatives but because it tried to evade making a choice and preferred to try to preserve the *status quo* without force. Russia, Germany, and Italy were all anxious for radical territorial changes and Hungarian and German minorities under alien rule were already clamouring for redress. There was never the slightest hope of preserving the *status quo* by general consent. Given the fact that British public opinion favoured a rapid and general disarmament, that our finances required it, and that the Dominions were not prepared in any circumstances to guarantee the Versailles and other treaties as a whole, it has long seemed strange to most students of the period that no British Government made any serious effort after Locarno to bring the European powers to the conference table to consider rewriting the treaties. Probably without the co-operation of the United States the attempt at an agreed resettlement of Europe would have failed, but we shall never know the answer to this question, which will remain a problem for scholarship candidates for generations to come, for the simple reason that it was never asked. A Central European and Danubian Customs Union, with a simultaneous lowering of tariffs in the rest of the world, might have been acceptable to the Germany of Stresemann and Brüning, but was less likely to have been acceptable to the jealous and ambitious succession states, whose dislike for each other was nearly as great as had been their common dislike of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. As for disarmament, the necessary prelude was a joint effort by

the powers to restore order in China, the settlement of Italy's colonial claims, and the stabilization of the internal political situation in Germany. There was only one possible alternative course, an agreement not on disarmament but on rearmament. Before the advent of Herr Hitler to power, Germany would have accepted a limited measure of rearmament, and France would have accepted a limited measure of superiority over Germany. That would have solved no problems but would at least have given further time for their solution in an atmosphere far less tense. Even, however, if the failure to get an agreed rewording of the peace treaties had been complete, we should, had the attempt been made, have known in time where we stood and have been able to prepare public opinion for the alternative policy of preserving the *status quo* by force.

Not enough attention has been called to the danger, first manifested in the inter-war period, of allowing a false public opinion to grow up under the influence of unofficial agencies. In Great Britain the influence of the League of Nations Union, and in the thirties of the Institute of International affairs, was steadily on the increase. Great sums of money were spent on instructing the public, and leaders of all parties lent their names to these organizations, which were brilliantly directed. They did, however, lead the great majority of men and women of goodwill to believe that the salvation of the world's peace could come, and could only come, through the League of Nations. The error was fundamental. The choice of alternatives remained the same whether the decision was taken at Geneva or in London. What the world wished and had a right to know was what choice we would make. To say, as we so often did, that we would acquiesce in any settlement provided it was made by consent and through the machinery of the League, well knowing that the League could settle nothing unless the powers were unanimous, was, in fact, a policy of hopeless drift. Owing to the misguided enthusiasm of the public, it was hailed as an heroic gesture of devotion to the newest and most progressive of the ideologies.

Mr. Baldwin's approach to the domestic problems of Great Britain was, fortunately, rather firmer than his handling of foreign policy. Having abandoned, as we have seen, protection

and imperial preference he proceeded, very deliberately, to lay, with the assistance of Mr. Neville Chamberlain and Mr. Winston Churchill, the firm foundations of the welfare state. Time had, by 1925, ended the old differences which had given Britain for so long a rigid two-party system. 'One dividing line,' as Professor Keith Feiling has recently reminded us, 'vanished with the Irish Treaty; another, older still, of Church against Dissent, faded away with the decline of religious faith. A third, of free trade against protection, was in abeyance. . . . Nor again was the democracy, which Peel so dreaded and which Salisbury found so perilous in foreign affairs, any longer in question.'¹ What was in question, as the Conservative party of those days saw it, was how the private enterprise system, necessary in its judgment to a non self-supporting country which can only live by selling its products at competitive prices in the world's markets, could be made acceptable in an unlimited democracy. The answer, it seemed clear, was to be found by accepting as public responsibilities, and thus, in effect, as a first charge on private enterprise, full statutory provision for old age, sickness, widowhood, and unemployment. The decision in 1926 to introduce widows' and contributory old age pensions was not a hurried remedy for an emergency, but a deliberate act of policy, and one from which there could be no withdrawal. Here was something permanent and revolutionary.

Previous attempts to temper the wind of individualism to the shorn lambs of capitalism had been governed by one clear principle. The case must be exceptional. The aged must not suffer because of their poverty; the sick must not suffer because of their sickness, or the unemployed from the inevitable dislocations of industry. The Act of 1925 introduced for the first time a new principle, the grant of pensions to the whole nation, excepting, for the time being, the income tax paying class. The State was here put forward as the normal paymaster to whom all were to look for maintenance in widowhood (which comes to the majority of women) and in old age, which comes to all. The State was no longer to be the occasional intervener in times of stress and strain and the reliever of dire poverty, but

¹ *op. cit.*, p. 1086.

the habitual and actually compulsory channel to which, in many of the normal eventualities of life, all people without distinction of means, class, and occupation would look for financial assistance.

Unfortunately, the Acts dealing with widows' and old age pensions were also noteworthy in a less creditable way. They marked the low-water mark of post-war finance. These Acts made vast promises, and conferred on future generations burdens vastly greater than those which would be borne by the first beneficiaries from the scheme. The finance of the scheme was to be balanced by a subsidy rising to £21,000,000 in 1942, and further by imposing on the Parliaments of 1936, 1946, and 1956 the obligation of raising the rate of the contributions. Meanwhile, the governments of 1925 and 1929 took the credit. These pensions, blandly announced and always described as contributory, would have become, in fact, genuinely contributory only in the case of people first entering into insurance in 1956. The pre-Act widows brought into the scheme by the Act of 1929 paid, of course, not a penny towards their pensions.

To this ambitious scheme were added Mr. Neville Chamberlain's important Housing Act, which in effect solved the housing shortage in the inter-war period, and his still more important Local Government Act of 1929, which paved the way for the final abolition of the Poor Law and for the creation in its place of the Public Assistance Board, which in the hey-day of Mr. Attlee's Socialist and full employment administration is still paying out over £60,000,000 a year to over 1,200,000 in the relief of destitution.

In writing of the 1920's we have not passed beyond the permitted limits of history, and it is fair to say that, as a matter of history, the pattern of the social system under which we live to-day is the creation not of Mr. Attlee or even of Mr. Churchill, but in truth of the 1925 administration. In so far as any politicians are in fact responsible for the numerous improvements in our conditions to-day, as compared with those in 1918, the politicians who must have the credit are those almost forgotten and, when remembered, derided figures, Mr. Stanley Baldwin and Mr. Neville Chamberlain. Whether the path on

which they set our feet was the right one or no, we have been unable to leave it, and all subsequent legislation has been within the framework of the social legislation of the twenties and thirties. The only exception is railway nationalization, which merely extended the principles already laid down by Mr. Lloyd George when he created the four great regional railway monopolies and by Lord Ashfield when he set up the London Passenger Transport Board.

In 1929 Mr. Baldwin's beneficent and reforming government went to the country and was decisively rejected by the new electorate which returned 287 Labour members with 8,360,000 votes, 261 Conservatives with 8,664,000 votes, and 59 Liberals with 5,300,000 votes.

For the parties of the left, 1929 proved the apocalyptic hour. Men and women had but to express their wish and it should be fulfilled. They had a great deal but they wished for more. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, with his battle cry 'Upward and onward,' was the appropriate prophet of the new dawn. But where were they going? A central political fact of the twenties is that twice the progressive parties enjoyed office and power with a clear working majority over the despised reactionaries of the Conservative party. The vast new electorate watched and waited and nothing happened. Was the brave new world just a mirage or was there something fundamentally wrong with the method of approach to Utopia? This last had been the first hurried diagnosis of the despondent millions of organized labour after the collapse of Mr. Macdonald's first administration. Parliament had failed, and so they would seize by 'direct action' the initiative in the great battle against reaction. But the vast majority of the new electorate had not been ready to despair. What was the use of their newly won political rights if Parliament was to be swept away by the T.U.C.? Nor were the T.U.C. themselves united. The general strike of 1926 had collapsed in the face of a hostile public opinion. In 1929 the Parliamentarians in the Labour party had their revenge and won, unaided, a clear electoral victory. It is generally said that the cause of the defeat was the failure of Mr. Baldwin and his lieutenants to solve the problem of unemployment. That is quite unhistorical. By 1929 there was

no unemployment problem. There was the terrible problem of the distressed areas, created by the permanent shrinkage of demand for our textiles, shipbuilding, coal, and iron and steel. Fifteen out of 600 poor law unions accounted for one-fifth of all poor law relief. The insured population in employment was greater in 1929 than ever before and real wages had risen 8 per cent since 1924 and were far higher than anywhere else in Europe. We have been taught for a decade or so that Mr. Baldwin and his ruthless and cruel Conservative colleagues tolerated, if they did not actually welcome, a great volume of unemployment which Mr. Attlee and his warm-hearted and Christian colleagues have, by taking thought, abolished. Men of goodwill, regardless of party, can only regret bitterly that this is quite untrue. How blessed it would indeed be if the shadow of unemployment, intermittently present throughout all recorded history, had indeed been banished for ever. Alas! It is not so. The problem which Mr. Baldwin so notably failed to solve was solved partly by time and partly by circumstance. In so far as it is not solved, no one else has anything more constructive to offer than the pre-war governments. It was in fact a problem which could only be solved by the migration of labour and by time. The young people moved out of the distressed areas; the older people in the course of time died. Meanwhile another world war has created a new shortage of shipping and of steel, and Japan and Germany are for a brief moment not competing with us in the world's export market. In 1929, however, there seemed to Mr. Baldwin to be no hope of a quick solution and he said so. It was Mr. Baldwin's candour, not his callousness, which lost him the election.

Mr. Ramsay Macdonald had nothing to offer in place of Mr. Baldwin's policy. He could, and did, spend more money, but the huge anti-Socialist majority made it impossible to nationalize our industries, and it is merely unhistorical to suppose that the Socialist Government had any policy of its own to cure the sickness of the distressed areas or to support our export trade in face of the increasingly adverse conditions which marked the years 1929 to 1932. The theme is not one on which the modern world has had much Socialist instruction because it has become

a cardinal doctrine of the party that unemployment was the direct and calculable consequence of Tory policy in the twenties and thirties. Actually the two catastrophic periods of unemployment came when the Tories were out of office. The first was during Mr. Lloyd George's deflation and the second was during Mr. Ramsay Macdonald's second administration. Mr. Lloyd George and his colleagues were certainly in part responsible for the first and Mr. Ramsay Macdonald and his colleagues for the second catastrophe. No free-trade country, however, and it was the Socialist party's fault that we were such a country, could have survived the world economic crisis in 1929-31 without a great volume of unemployment. Nevertheless, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald led us directly and with unnecessary haste into the crisis. Mr. Baldwin had set a stiff pace and Mr. Ramsay Macdonald was determined to better it. Whatever the world conditions, our progress should be upward and onward. We shall pull through, said Mr. Baldwin rather ruefully, and lost the election. We shall go from strength to strength, said Mr. Ramsay Macdonald and led the country into the public bankruptcy of 1931.

In 1933 a famous cartoon appeared in the *New Yorker*. Two prosperous republicans are clinging in a calm sea to two lifebuoys. Close at hand their ship is sinking fast. One turns to the other with a complacent look. 'Fundamentally,' he says, 'the ship was perfectly sound.' It was with that conviction the public returned the Socialists to office in 1929. With that conviction the Socialists led us coolly and deliberately to the crisis of 1930-31.

There is no mystery whatever about the origins or nature of that crisis as far as it concerns this country. It had nothing to do with reparations, war debts, or the maldistribution of gold. It was the direct result of a prolonged failure of British costs to follow the trend of world prices, and their failure was reflected in the over-valuation of the £ sterling. What the Socialists did between 1929 and 1931 was to place the last straws on the back of an already enfeebled camel. Directly political confidence in the integrity of British governmental finance weakened, the long-feared flight from the £ became a fact. The cause of the disparity between British costs and world prices

was due to equally clear causes. The first was the disastrous error of stabilizing the gold value of the £ sterling at pre-war parity which all parties had applauded. The second was the continuing expansion of governmental expenditure. The third was the particular character of post-war governmental expenditure, which was, to an overwhelming extent, not concerned with the production of goods or services, but with the direct distribution of cash. The result was that as prices fell the government's expenditure became more onerous to productive industry, and so each stage tended to intensify the distress which it was planned to remove. 'Fundamentally the ship was,' in good plain fact, 'perfectly unsound.' If there had been no world crisis, no American stock market collapse, and no German and Austrian bank failures, the British crisis might have been delayed, but it could not, without retrenchment and reform, have been avoided. The immediate causes of the crisis were some foolish loans to Germany, and Mr. Snowden's reckless budgeting in March 1930 and his still more improvident arrangements for 1931-32. These mistakes greatly intensified foreign anxiety and, by further weakening government credit at home, added to the overhead costs of industry just at the time when world prices were near their worst.

If, however, the world economic collapse was not a necessary factor in producing our own internal crisis, it aggravated its nature and prolonged its duration. The causes of the world collapse are complex, but most of the so-called causes, such as the maldistribution of gold, the collapse of agricultural prices, the over-production of certain manufactured goods, and the growth of tariffs and other restrictions on international trade, must be read if we are to understand our contemporary history with any approach to accuracy, not as causes but as effects. The first fact to be clear about is that whereas pre-war international lending was politically hazardous but economically sound, the inter-war international lending found its only and slender justification in politics, and had, speaking broadly, no economic basis whatever. The loans of the eighteenth and nineteenth century were for the creation of productive assets. The inter-war loans to Germany and Austria, in particular, were speculations in political futures or gestures of goodwill

designed to buy off with the minor evil of uneconomic investment the major evil of another political upheaval. In other words, the nations of the world were playing with the debtor nations the same game that the politicians in every country were playing with their electorates. They were creating an artificial appearance of prosperity in the hope that something would turn up to justify it. Unfortunately, they were, at the same time, ensuring against the one faint chance of anything turning up by a conjoint policy of feeble and feckless surrender in the East, which led to the almost total loss of the Chinese market, to the emergence of militant nationalism in Japan and in India, and to a growing hostility to European trading interests over more than one-half of the world. China, in fact, was the only field in which the pre-war export economy could possibly have functioned after 1918. The decay of the pre-war political vigour and courage denied this opportunity. For the rest, the rapid growth of industrialization during the war was intensified by the political settlements of the peace, and something near to self-sufficiency had become necessary for all the new states. This necessity became urgently imperative with the development everywhere of the welfare state at varying levels of beneficence.

Wise men will continue to offer learned technical diagnoses of the causes of the world economic collapse of 1929-30. The search for a technical cause of a catastrophe is a necessity to those who wish to believe that intelligence and goodwill can together produce the millennium. Maybe they can, and, if so, it is to be devoutly hoped that they will hasten to do so. Meanwhile, it is more prudent to reflect that in 1931, as at every other crucial stage of human history, the sufferings of mankind were attributable to a fundamental maladjustment between men's desires and their capacities. By way of reaction from the sufferings of the First World War there was a universal expectation of better times to be experienced with less effort. Unfortunately, such prosperity as the world had enjoyed in the past had been due to hard work, thrift, peace, and an international exchange system which ensured that any nation seeking to enjoy a higher standard of life than was justified by the value of its productivity in terms of world prices would be quickly

taught a lesson. This economic discipline could never be restored in the inter-war period (and it was, in a sense, to the credit of the world of that day that this should have been so) because men everywhere were determined that social justice should take precedence over economic prudence. During the twenties, however, the world overshot the mark and brought itself not to the frontiers of Utopia but back to the edge of the plain of Armageddon. The next nine years led the world step by step into the abyss.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE THIRTIES

YEARS WILL have to pass before the history of the years preceding the Second World War can be written. Much will never be known. Many of the recriminations addressed to the British and French statesmen who held high office during these years are based on guesswork. What was done was ill advised. That is obvious from the event. Is it, however, certain that, if the world had known what it now knows, the public temper in England, France, and Italy would have been such as to compel the adoption of different policies? It is relevant, if very far from reassuring, to reflect that Europe to-day, faced with a menace far graver, far more overt, and far more imminent than that which became evident when Hitler first obtained real power, in 1932, appears quite unable to forearm itself against a declared enemy, nor is Britain, although ruled by the very men who have been for years the bitterest critics of our post-1931 policies, any more ready now than in 1932 and 1933 to take the lead in energizing Western Europe in its own defence or to make a positive and practical contribution of her own to the collective, economic, and military strength which is necessary to the survival of western civilization.

Then, as now, Britain was in the throes of a financial crisis. Then, as now, France was hopelessly divided and incapable of producing any stable government. Those who say that we had only to overthrow Hitler by military force in 1933 (when Germany left the League) to relieve Europe for ever from the threat of another world war, forget that relations between Italy and France were strained almost to breaking point, that we could not even get into Germany, let alone fight there, without French co-operation, and that public opinion in both countries

was unprepared for war and disinclined to effort. Even, however, if the effort had been made and Hitler had been driven from office, the world would have continued to face the central problem of rewriting the peace treaties, or not rewriting them, in the same mood as before and not in the mood of 1938 or 1939. It was on allied disarmament, not on rearmament, that such enthusiasm as there was in those uneasy days was centred, and the peaceful gesture, not the mailed fist, was the only fashionable prescription for the world's ills.

In this spirit a provisional armament agreement was actually reached with Germany in 1932. The initiative had come from Dr. Brüning's tottering government. But Germany by then was on the verge of revolution. If we wish to note a turning point, it must, we suggest, be put earlier than that, in the years between 1929 and 1932, when German democracy was first challenged, and if we wish to go deeper below the surface we must go back to the fateful and, as we believe, fatal decision to put the conscience and the moral and military authority of the great powers into commission at Geneva—a decision which dates from the original peace treaties. No serious student of history will lightly accept, however, any single explanation for a world catastrophe. Chance, as at Sarajevo, may often determine the issue, and in the years between 1929 and 1935 the accidents of democratic politics played a large, and possibly the decisive, part. For the delays which wrecked any hope of a settlement of the armaments issue with Germany in 1930 and 1931 the blame must be laid chiefly on France, but there was a lack of statesmanship everywhere, for which no creed or party can be directly blamed. Stresemann was dead, Briand was dying, Sir Austen Chamberlain was out of office. Dr. Brüning was scrupulous and sincere, but weak; M. Tardieu was suspicious and inactive and had allowed himself to be drawn into a quarrel with Italy which wrecked the Naval Disarmament Conference of 1930 and provided evidence of the divisions between the Entente Powers. Mr. Arthur Henderson was conscientious but dilatory, and was moreover fatally handicapped by representing a minority government with no real mandate and less moral authority. The same fatal abdication of responsibility which had destroyed the constructive draft of Article X

of the Covenant eleven years before was, in 1930, reflected in the weakness of all the western governments.

Once foreign affairs had become a democratic concern the stability of Europe was in any case weakened. From 1929 to 1932 the domestic politics of Europe were in such disorder that at no time were all the principal governments concerned simultaneously secure and simultaneously in a position to negotiate and carry through a long-term policy. In particular, the stability of any French Government depended during these years on maintaining a stiff opposition to German claims, while any German Government, if it was to resist the growing anti-democratic reaction, had to secure from France and Great Britain substantial concessions. After the German 1931 elections, when the Nazis won 107 seats and the Communists 77, Dr. Brüning attempted to obtain consent to the *Anschluss* with Austria. He failed, because of French opposition. By this time Mr. Ramsay Macdonald's Labour administration was discredited and Great Britain herself on the verge of an economic crisis. The pressure of a strong British Government and a united people might have been successful in inducing the French to modify their attitude, and so checking the advance of German National Socialism. As things were, Mr. Arthur Henderson was powerless.

Early in 1932 the Disarmament Conference opened at Geneva. By that time Mr. Ramsay Macdonald had formed the first National Government and Mr. Arthur Henderson was out of office. He had been succeeded for a few weeks by Lord Reading and then by Sir John Simon, but remained president, in his personal capacity, of the Disarmament Conference. The conference opened to the accompaniment of the Japanese guns bombarding Shanghai. Though few realized it, the Second World War had begun. Two months later the Nazis, in the spring elections, gained control of Prussia.

The sands were running out, but Englishmen of all schools of thought failed to realize that the days of parliamentary democracy in Germany were numbered. They had fooled themselves for years that the Russian Revolution was a transient movement of political extremists which would inevitably give place to a moderate government. Now they watched the rise

of Hitler with amused and rather pitying complacency. It was simply inconceivable that a people who had known the pleasures of democracy should vote themselves out of them and install a dictator instead of a parliament.

Dr. Brüning was less certain, and immediately he learned the results of the Prussian elections he hurried to Geneva with a concrete proposal for limited German rearmament. He secured the agreement of Great Britain, but the French representative, M. Tardieu, was not at Geneva; a general election was in progress in France. Chance, again, was playing the hand. When he was summoned to discuss the Geneva proposals, he was dissuaded by his ambassador in Berlin, who assured him that Dr. Brüning was about to fall from office and that a lasting and more favourable agreement could be secured from his successor. This information came from General von Schleicher, who himself succeeded Herr von Papen as Chancellor soon after the July elections. It was given to prevent Dr. Brüning from re-establishing his prestige by the successful negotiation of German rearmament. M. Tardieu fell into the trap. That was the end of the Weimar republic, and it sealed the fate of parliamentary democracy on the Continent for a generation. On 30th January 1933 Hitler became Chancellor of the German Reich.

The result was devastating for the Disarmament Conference, which became a public farce. The powerlessness of the League, in face of the divisions of the great powers, roused the dormant energies of Russia, Japan, and Germany to a realization of their opportunities. Russian penetration in Turkestan and Mongolia was quiet, and little notice was taken of it. If we had lost the Nelson touch, we had at least preserved his blind eye. The first overt blow to the peace organization was struck by Japan in 1933, when she invaded Manchuria and refused to account to the League for her action. As usual Great Britain had no policy, which was inexcusable, for while the ingenious Dr. Beneš, who led the representatives of the smaller powers at Geneva to their final eclipse, was wholly unconcerned with events in the Far East, Great Britain was vitally concerned. For fifty years Japan had had her eye on Manchuria. Once already she had conquered it, and had been made to return it

to China. Now the League made her a present of it, and signed its own death warrant in the process. Had the statesmen of Geneva been cynical they would have recognized the *fait accompli* and solemnly blessed it. Had they been heroic they would have denounced it and tried to support China with effective military assistance. Instead, they made a series of recommendations, which had no effect whatever on the situation. The leaders of the British Labour party have since said that they would have urged the use of economic sanctions against Japan, a course which would ultimately have involved us in war. They might have tried to do so, but they would certainly have failed, because it was only political public opinion which was behind the demand for League intervention. Wars to-day demand the support of an intense national sentiment, and in this case that sentiment was not aroused. China at that time was in the hands of military bandits, and Manchuria in particular had been in the personal power of a war lord who did not even profess allegiance to the government which now claimed that its sovereignty had been infringed by Japan.

The merits, legal and ethical, of China's case against Japan at that time cannot be discussed here. The facts determined the event. China was the first victim of the fatal League doctrine of non-intervention; once the great powers disinterested themselves in her growing anarchy, Japanese intervention was inevitable. The attempt of the League to condition and limit it, after years of inaction, was doomed to failure. If the powers were too idle, too callous, or too poor to make that relatively small military effort that would have been necessary to save China from herself, it is folly to suppose that they would or could have dispatched the two million men who would have been necessary to challenge the strongest military power in Asia.

The impotence of the League in this matter was quickly noted by France. It was obvious that the support of the League, even a unanimous verdict of the League Council, was at best a mere diplomatic asset. It provided no element of security against an open breach of the Versailles Treaty by Germany. The immediate consequence was the breakdown of the

Disarmament Conference and the withdrawal of Germany from the League.

It needed only one more blow to the League's prestige in Europe before Germany formally fulfilled France's expectations and denounced the Versailles Treaty openly and without even the formality of consultation. This last blow was provided by the results of the Saar Plebiscite on 17th January 1935. In some quarters the fact was not appreciated. Hitler, however, missed none of its significance, nor did the French War Office, who anticipated Germany's later action by a few days and increased the period of military service from one year to two.

Superficially the Saar affair was a triumph for the League, and not least for the British Foreign Office, which took a leading part in securing the agreements preliminary to the plebiscite, and for once was not backward in guaranteeing their effective execution. Ironical indeed that the result should have dealt the *coup de grâce* to the British foreign policy of the last seventeen years. Yet so it was. Such authority as the post-war peace organization possessed, derived, as we have seen, from its allegedly representative character. It was an extension of the machinery of parliamentary democracy, and its title deeds to authority were the principles of nineteenth-century Liberalism. Challenge after challenge had been offered to these principles by different governments, since the St. Martin's Summer of Liberalism at Versailles in 1919. The governments of Russia, Turkey, Italy, Poland, Yugoslavia, and, lastly, Germany, had turned their backs firmly on the whole corpus of Liberal philosophy. Spain was about to follow suit. But the theory was held that, despite all appearances, the hearts of common men still beat true to the old formulae, and stout Tories questioning the credentials of M. Stalin were at one over this with the Labour party and the Liberals. Nothing, they all felt, but vile oppression could ever lead decent and simple people to depart from the principles of representative government. The Saar was to provide the proof.

Here was a population of mixed race, enjoying free institutions, who had, by a stroke of good fortune, escaped the monstrous political tyrannies which a ruthless political gangster

was imposing on Germany. They were also enjoying marked economic advantages under the League's regime. As the plebiscite approached, the platforms of the Saar were thronged by earnest Liberals and heralds of the new dawn to preach the gospel to a people protected in the exercise of free choice by the military forces of international democracy. With the heralds of the new dawn came plentiful supplies of money. An immense propaganda, protected from the interference of what we now know to have been the overwhelming majority of the population, was launched. Its volume deceived even the most experienced political observers. At last the day of decision arrived. British, Swedish, and Italian officials supervised the polling stations, and the polling lists and stations were so arranged that by no human possibility could it become known how towns, districts, or individuals had voted. The result was a vote for National Socialism so overwhelming that it actually exceeded the majority which Hitler had obtained in Germany under conditions of his own choosing, on the issue of disarmament, on which his opponents felt almost as strongly as his supporters. All that was left of the 'popular party' in the Saar, which was to tell the world what plain men felt about the repudiation of the principles of Liberalism, was a handful of unpopular politicians disconsolately packing their bags. We had intervened at last in the European theatre, only to mount guard over the formal and enthusiastic obsequies of the system to which we had pinned our faith. Germany expressed her gratitude to the League in most becoming terms. Germany at least had understood the verdict. It was at the polling booths of the Saar that the Versailles settlement was buried. On 16th March 1935 the funeral oration was pronounced at the Wilhelmstrasse, and Hitler completed a diplomatic triumph without precedent since the days of Cavour.

For the second time since 1918—the first time had been at Chanak—the statesmen of the democracies learned that men of strong will and ruthless determination will triumph over the best intentions of irresolute committee men.

The European situation deteriorated rapidly after the Saar Plebiscite and Hitler's denunciation of the disarmament clauses of the Versailles Treaty in the spring of 1935. Nevertheless,

the British Government, through Mr. Ramsay Macdonald and Sir John Simon, made a last effort to ride the storm. Immediately after Hitler's introduction of conscription, they created the so-called Stresa Front. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald was harking back to his original policy and determined on a last effort to keep Italy by the side of Great Britain and France. With a friendly Italian Army on the Brenner, Germany's designs on Austria could be checked, if not checkmated. The enigmatic M. Laval in France was of the same mind, and was prepared at the eleventh hour (or so it was believed) to make substantial concessions to Italy. The Stresa policy collapsed on the issue of Abyssinia. The Franco-Italian Agreement was signed but not ratified. The Stresa agreement between Great Britain, Italy, and France became a dead letter.

We shall probably never know how it came about that no reference was made to Abyssinia at the Stresa meeting between Mussolini, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, and Sir John Simon. The Italians had brought their colonial experts to discuss the matter, which was not only ripe for discussion but capable of settlement. The question became later impossible of settlement by reason of the Italian aggression, but in its origin and essence it was not so. The methods of the government at Addis Ababa at that date had been denounced much more severely by the British than by the Italians. Indeed, when the breakdown came, the Italian propagandists relied greatly on the reports on Abyssinia presented by the British Anti-Slavery Society to the League, and particularly on a book written by Lady Simon, the wife of the British Foreign Secretary. Further, there had been trouble for some years on the Sudan-Abyssinia frontier as well as on the Eritrea border. Finally, the ultimate need for some agreement between Great Britain, Italy, and Egypt on the future of Abyssinia had been recognized as long ago as 1906, when Italy's special interests in the region had been accepted by Britain and France in one of the secret clauses of the agreements made at Algeciras.

Was the British silence about Abyssinia at Stresa taken by Signor Mussolini for consent? It can hardly have been so intended, but if our silence was due only to excessive politeness, to a mere reluctance to spoil an harmonious interview by raising

a delicate question, then it was the most misplaced courtesy in the history of diplomacy. No explanation has ever been given. The historian can only record the fact and the consequences. A few days later Sir John Simon asked Sir Austen Chamberlain to tell the Italian ambassador, Signor Grandi, that we were, in fact, hostile to the Italian plans for Abyssinia, but Grandi had previously warned Mussolini of Britain's very strong feeling in the matter and was now hopelessly discredited at Rome because Britain had not mentioned the matter at Stresa. Italy had, in plain fact, been greatly reassured and went straight ahead during the summer of 1935 with her preparations for a war finally fatal to the three-power coalition which, however vacillating and discordant, had yet remained dominant in Europe since 11th November 1918.

Sir John Simon's tenure of office had thus been marked by two major catastrophes: the failure to sustain and preserve the Weimar republic by forcing an agreement on German rearmament, and the failure either to seek an agreement with Italy on Abyssinia or to give her a clear and timely warning of our opposition to her plans so that she could modify them without loss of prestige. It would be wrong to place the chief blame for these catastrophes on Sir John Simon himself. The principal responsibility lay with Mr. Ramsay Macdonald and Mr. Stanley Baldwin. It is necessary to conclude that they were led astray by a quite unrealistic view both of the methods appropriate to the conduct of foreign policy and the nature of the people with whom they were dealing.

By 1935 the British Government had long since given up the balanced views as to the nature and purposes of the League, which they had held at the Peace Conference. The League had by 1935 become invested with magic. It was no longer a piece of diplomatic machinery belonging to the world as it is, but the mystical symbol of a new world seen on a distant horizon. That world was a democratic world, we were told, but it was a world in which democracy had come, by some strange inversion, to mean little more than the support of the British view as to the correct method of settling disputes. By 1935 this question had become a British obsession which confused every issue and confounded every hope of peace. To

those who came with pens, ink, and paper in their hands and suggested a conference, we would concede the most vital British interests, as we had already done at that date over the American debt, over Egypt, and over the fortification of the Dardanelles, and were to do in 1938 over our treaty rights in the Irish Free State ports. But a conference there must be, and consents freely given. Except for ourselves, no one of the great powers was prepared freely to concede anything. We, for our part, were not prepared to coerce either our friends or our enemies. In this course we persisted, with an almost insensate obstinacy. The failure to provide in the League Covenant for any machinery to compel changes in the *status quo* had created a dilemma. Either the *status quo* had to be maintained or the consent of all parties concerned had to be obtained for its alteration. On this dilemma we remained immovably impaled, while the world marched recklessly to destruction.

In regard to disarmament, the essential was a settlement which would consolidate the cracking fabric of the Weimar republic. We could and should have enforced it. We could have put pressure on France which would have been decisive. In the case of Abyssinia, the essential was a settlement which preserved the balance of forces in Central Europe without which a Second World War was inevitable. We could have put pressure on Abyssinia which would have resulted in such a settlement, and a settlement, moreover, which would have preserved the Abyssinian Empire and avoided the shedding of blood. In neither of these vital matters were we prepared to put any pressure at all on any interested party, except for the defence of the *status quo*. We defended our policy as the only one which accorded with the dictates of morality. We sincerely believed this to be so. We forgot that in the Europe of that time there was no common creed and no common morality. Not only was our policy not regarded as moral by those who suffered its consequences; it was regarded, and with deep sincerity, as the exact reverse. This is not meant to suggest that we should have taken our views of what was moral from Dr. Brüning or, still less, from Signor Mussolini. It is written to remind all whose votes or voices can influence policy that

the defence of the *status quo* by a great and rich empire, however disinterested it may be, will never be accepted as such by the rest of the world. It is a policy, therefore, in which nations will not co-operate on moral grounds, although they may be persuaded to co-operate for other reasons.

Our failure to understand this was at least a principal cause of the catastrophe which was to ensue. The test of foreign policy is the degree to which you persuade and induce other nations along the path which you desire to follow. In so far as it is to the good of mankind to follow that path, in so far will your policy be wise, but other nations will not accept it because it is wise. By force or by gifts they have to be persuaded that it is to their own best interests to fall in line with it.

This was not the technique followed by Mr. Ramsay Macdonald and Mr. Baldwin.

There are still supporters for their ideals, if not for their policy; these men argue that the catastrophe which to-day engulfs the world is a proof that the League was, in fact, the only hope for mankind. Had we ourselves, they say, believed in the League sufficiently strongly to fight for it, the rest of the world would have followed us, the League would have been saved, and the Second World War would have been prevented. There is no evidence for this at all. The universal reluctance to fight for the League was not due to cynicism or laziness, but was the expression of a doubt almost universally felt as to the League's effectiveness as an instrument for reordering the world. It is very difficult indeed to say that this doubt was unreasonable. By the time of Mr. Eden's appointment as Minister for League of Nations Affairs, the active supporters of the League were the beneficiaries of the post-war treaties and the Russian Soviet State, which had been admitted to the League as a makeweight for the loss of Germany. To neutral eyes the League was not the heaven-sent architect of a brave new world but the headquarters of a dubious coalition of rich empires for the defence of their possessions against the 'dissatisfied powers,' as Germany, Italy, and Japan were beginning to be called. Active support of the League seemed to neutrals more likely to engulf them in world war than to preserve peace. Even France, although she clung to the League as a diplomatic

instrument in defence of her rights and interests, and in particular of the territorial clauses of the Versailles Treaty, had no sympathy with the British dream of the League as an instrument for creating a new world order. Those in France who wished to see a new world order were looking at that time to Moscow rather than to Geneva. Even if the Abyssinian War had not taken place, it is doubtful whether France would ever have ratified M. Laval's Franco-Italian pact, which was essential if the *status quo* in Europe was to be preserved.

The Geneva idea, as Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Eden saw it in 1935, was thus being attacked simultaneously from the right and the left, and the centre parties, who would have co-operated more readily with Great Britain in bringing it to fruition, were either already in eclipse, as in Germany, or on the threshold of eclipse, as in France, Italy, and Spain. The year 1935 was the prelude to revolution. The next year saw the first Popular Front Government in France and the Spanish Civil War, while the pro-English, pro-League sentiment in Italy was overwhelmed by the patriotic excitements which accompanied the Abyssinian campaign. The British Government had, indeed, seen late and dimly the writing on the wall, and in March 1935 (three days before Hitler reintroduced conscription) they had issued the first feeble call to the nation to rearm. Unfortunately for the peace of the world, the faint voice of the first White Paper on rearmament had been drowned by the strident noise of the Peace Ballot, which in the summer of 1935 disclosed, or appeared to disclose, an immense majority in Great Britain in favour of the League policy just when the League prestige in Europe was at its lowest.

In leading the League to impose modified and inconclusive sanctions on Italy as a punishment for her illegal invasion of Abyssinia, Mr. Baldwin, Sir Samuel Hoare, and Mr. Eden were following the voice of their conscience and acting in accordance with the general will of the electorate. At the same time, there is some reason for thinking that the British Government was misinformed, both as to the Italian strength and the Abyssinian weakness, and still more misinformed as to the probable efficacy of sanctions. War material poured into Italy from Germany, through Switzerland and Austria, and from Greece

by sea. Only from Great Britain and France was there any effective withholding of supplies. On these two powers fell the whole burden of Italy's hostility. Soon after the general election of October 1935, we tried to repair the greatest diplomatic blunder committed by this country since the days of James I by formulating proposals with France for a compromise settlement. The French Government was tottering to its fall, but Mr. Baldwin's government had just received a fresh and clear mandate from the electorate and decided, for once, to take a bold initiative. The result was the famous Hoare-Laval proposal. This proposal, if put forward privately, would have been acceptable to both belligerents, would have given Italy a great diplomatic success but would have preserved a measure of sovereignty to the Abyssinians. Instead, it was made in good faith by a government determined above all to save the face of the League. The plan was therefore published to the world, and at once condemned by the left-wing press in France and the whole of the press in Great Britain and the United States. Most of the neutrals were sceptical; Russia was frankly hostile. The plan was withdrawn in a panic, almost before it had been rejected by both belligerents on very different grounds. Italy saw in the disunion of the League forces the chance of a complete victory. Abyssinia was so utterly misled by the outcry against the concessions proposed to be given to Italy as to think that the world would, if need be, rally actively to her side. Mr. Baldwin lost his nerve; Sir Samuel Hoare resigned; Haile Selassie lost his throne and the world drifted on to the catastrophe which was now, humanly speaking, unavoidable.

The Hoare-Laval proposal was, of course, only a bad second-best. Italy's attack on Abyssinia had been wholly unprovoked. If the Amharic dynasty, presided over by the Emperor Haile Selassie, was certainly not the representative of a people rightly struggling to be free,¹ it had been the victim of a naked act of aggression, and the Hoare-Laval proposal represented nothing more nor less than a surrender to force. As a reward for returning to Geneva's fold, the aggressor was to be allowed to

¹ Haile Selassie was not even the hereditary emperor. The nominal heir was in chains in a dungeon.

retain more than half the booty. It was not a pretty story, but it was not a pretty world, and the alternative was just a fairy tale. If 'all or nothing' was to be our policy, it would inevitably be nothing. Neither the Cabinet nor the country was united on war, and France would not fight. Yet war was the only alternative to an Italian triumph, once compromise was ruled out. While Great Britain was licking her wounds, Hitler, on 7th March 1936, staged the second of his coups and marched into the Rhineland.

This, if *real politik* had been our game, was the moment for a war with Germany. Germany's bluff was audacious. Not even the German General Staff expected it to succeed. But France was weak and irresolute and British public opinion in a state of confusion. Propaganda is a two-edged weapon: it can energize and it can paralyse. For ten years, roughly from 1920 to 1930, Great Britain had been deluged with left-wing propaganda against France, in favour of Germany, against the Versailles Treaties. More Liberalism, more generosity, self-determination for the vanquished as well as for the victor—these had been the loud and insistent cries of the Liberal and Labour parties supported by not a few Conservatives. A lot of the mud had stuck. To many it seemed not only unwise but wrong to go to war to prevent Germans marching into Germany. It was true that Hitler had denounced the Locarno Treaty, but in so doing he was in effect only renouncing our guarantee of his own frontier. France was not endangered, for in the event of German aggression our guarantee under the Locarno Treaty still held. Yet it was not this argument which was conclusive, but that same aversion from realistic and dynamic diplomacy which had condemned the Hoare-Laval proposal. In a perfect world Italy would not be able to conquer Abyssinia. In a perfect world the Germans would be able to do what they liked in the Rhineland. These pious but irrelevant considerations still dominated the leaders and the people of Great Britain to a remarkable extent. The notorious deficiency of our armaments did the rest. Germany was allowed to secure her flank and so prepare for the annexation of Austria.

It is a necessary criticism of our policy that if we were

prepared for the remilitarization of the Rhineland we should have offered it freely, before it was asked for, as part of a general settlement with Germany. If we were not prepared to offer it freely, we should not have accepted it when carried out by a *coup de main*. The trouble was that while the Liberalizing sentiment—justice for Germany—was wearing itself out, we were swinging over not to a policy of armed realism with national security as our aim, but to the League of Nations Union conception of an armed League in defence of the *status quo*. On this platform our own country could not have been united in 1935 (Labour was still strongly opposed to rearmament), and Europe was definitely hostile to the idea. Even the Peace Ballot, planned on the most modern lines, with every question skilfully twisted on the familiar ‘Have you stopped beating your wife?’ pattern, had shown an imposing minority opposed to *military* sanctions on behalf of the League. After the fiasco of sanctions against Italy, this minority was certainly increased. Moreover, of the majority of the voters who might have favoured military sanctions (if indeed it was still a majority, which is quite doubtful) a great many had been led to their opinion by years of propaganda in favour of self-determination on racial grounds. It had been this party which had most strongly condemned the Hoare-Laval proposal. But this party was necessarily less concerned about the occupation of the Rhineland. The same fatal confusion of opinion was to paralyse our diplomacy over Austria and over the Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia.

After the collapse of the Weimar republic, we had had a choice of two positive policies. We could have built up a strong military coalition, based on mutual self-interest, to restrain Germany, seeking the greater good, at the expense of the less, on nineteenth-century lines. Alternatively, we could have made a virtue of what (given the failure to build up a military coalition) would have proved a necessity, and initiated in 1934 a policy of appeasement based on self-determination and economic concession. The first policy we abandoned after Stresa; we came back to it, tentatively, with the Hoare-Laval proposals, and then abandoned it again. The appeasement policy we never attempted until 1938, when it was visibly too

late, when Germany was committed to the path of ruthless and criminal aggression, and when the public temper made appeasement as impossible for Great Britain as Hitler's ambition made it for Germany.

Failing, during the critical years from 1934 to 1938, to adopt either of these positive policies, we should logically have fallen back on a policy of armed isolation, regained the two-power standard at sea, quadrupled our air force, and waited on events. Fortunately, or unfortunately, public opinion, too divided, according to our rulers, to enable us to adopt either of the only possible positive policies, was yet too united in favour of the League idea to enable us to adopt the only possible negative policy.

The lesson of the events of 1930 to 1939 is for students of contemporary politics more important than the events themselves. The lesson remains and must be learnt if a world war is not to break out a third time. The lesson is for the politicians, the press, and the public. All have their responsibility and none of any party or creed is blameless.

Let us take as a text the Spanish Civil War which brought Europe, during the three years of its tragic course, to a point of disunion and mutual distrust which was certainly one of the causes of the final catastrophe. Any merely competent clerk in any foreign office in the world must have seen, the moment the Spanish Civil War broke out, an event of immense consequence to Europe. Yet the majority of our politicians were certainly unaware of this. The oldest monarchy in Europe, excepting our own, had been dismissed by a *coup d'état* of progressive politicians in 1931. The event had aroused little or no interest. That in itself was significant. A great country cannot dispose of its history without consequences. No one seemed to be aware of this fact, or, if they were, they were indifferent to what the consequences might be. For four and a half years events in Spain were side-line news. The expulsion of the Jesuits, the confiscation of property, the secularization of education, the legalization of divorce—these sure signposts to revolution were passed amid the world's indifference. When, in 1934, the appointment of three practising Catholics to posts in a democratically elected Spanish Government provoked a

Communist rebellion, not one single voice, among those who to-day protest so rightly and so sincerely against the gangster governments which rule half the world, was raised in protest. It may well be said that the time for protest had not come. Some impartial people would agree. What is incredible, however, is that these signs of impending crisis should not have been intelligently and *positively* appreciated.

A revolutionary situation was developing and, as far as this country was concerned, a great deal would depend upon the issue of the struggle and our own attitude towards it. Spain, to the most cursory glance, was either going to the left, to become a western outpost of Bolshevism, or to the right, to become, with our ancient ally Portugal, a Christian and civilized outpost, but still an outpost, of authoritarianism. For England this was a vital matter. Even if our leaders were wholly ignorant of the moral and political issues at stake, not one of them was unaware of the importance of Gibraltar, or of the almost equal military importance of a neutral Spain in the event of a new Anglo-German war fought out on French soil. There was certainly going to be a new Spain. It was therefore on the lowest grounds of self-interest essential that the British Government should watch the situation and so manœuvre as to be on terms of closest friendship with her.

We had another and equally vital interest in Spain. In the event of a world war, the Portuguese Atlantic ports might well be invaluable to us. Portugal, however, could not be expected to be actively with us if Spain were to be even negatively hostile to us.

This is not the place to discuss the respective merits of the combatants in the Spanish Civil War, nor to attempt to find the truth of its origins. We are concerned only with the British Government's attitude to the conflict and the repercussions of that attitude on the international situation. Here was a civil war having as its immediate cause a military revolt against a threatened anarchy. On the one side was the army and the Church and the middle classes, supported by Italy, on the other the Communist and anarchist parties supported by the miners in Asturias, the Basque separatists, and the proletariat of most of the great cities, and actively assisted by Russia. France and

Germany were likely to take a hand, but at the outset only Russia and Italy were involved and neither of them as yet substantially.

Here, on the one hand, was a supreme chance offered to us out of the blue, by a Providence which seldom gives second chances to any one, to repair the catastrophe of sanctions, to create a Mediterranean coalition against hostile and disruptive ideas whether they came from Berlin or Moscow, to secure our hold on Gibraltar, and to link France, Italy, and Spain with us in a strong Atlantic coalition. Here, on the other hand, was a chance to plant the flag of revolution at the gates of the Atlantic, to strengthen and carry to triumph the incipient French Revolution of which the victory of the Popular Front Government in May 1936 was the probable precursor. On the first view, we could have restored the Stresa Front. On the second view, we could encircle Germany with a cordon of actively revolutionary powers whose very existence would depend on maintaining a united front against the forces of reaction. Here, if ever in our lifetime, was the great game set and big stakes to play for. It is easy to say that the choice before the British politician was difficult; that no one could foresee the issue of the struggle; that it was safer to sit on the fence. To that argument we need only put a simple question. Did it prove safer? If questions of this kind, on which the whole future of continental politics depends in each generation, are insoluble by simple islanders, then the simple islanders must revert at once and for ever to a policy of isolation. If we are in the game of European politics, an intricate and difficult game of incalculable odds, we must take sides and be ready to back our judgment, reinforced by our strong right arm. If we dare not risk a judgment, the sooner we quit the better.

Had the British Government given open assistance to Madrid they might have defeated General Franco. Had the government insisted on a more searching investigation into the religious persecution, and published the facts which they could easily have ascertained, the British public would have been ready to recognize the Salamanca Government. There are groups in this country who would have emphatically condemned

either policy. What every one must condemn, in the light of history, is our failure to reach any decision at all about the Spanish war and on our own proper action in regard to it. As a result we alienated ourselves simultaneously from Russia, France, and Italy. We showed ourselves wedded neither to principles nor to self-interest. As in the case of the Rhineland, we lost a great diplomatic and military opportunity without securing to ourselves the respect which comes to those who hold steadfastly even to false principles. The Spanish war provided us with a remarkable chance either to break the Rome-Berlin Axis or to organize an at least apparently powerful coalition against it. Leaving moral and political principles altogether on one side, we neglected both chances. We rejected them, not because we set principles above the national interest, but because we were quite unable to decide what our principles were or where our interest lay.

In March 1938, while the Spanish Civil War was at its height and relations between Britain, France, and Russia were very strained, Hitler invaded Austria.

This stroke was the direct consequence of the British Government's support of Abyssinia and the French Government's support of the revolutionary side in the Spanish Civil War. These two policies, the first feebly and irresolutely opposed by France, the second feebly and irresolutely opposed by ourselves, had finally alienated Italy and had driven her, to escape isolation, into the arms of Germany. There are strong grounds for believing that, even at the eleventh hour, Italy would have preferred to remain with France and Great Britain, but Italy was committed, by virtue of her fear and hatred of Bolshevism, to the cause of General Franco, and the French Popular Front Government, trusting as implicitly to Russia as did the bourgeois French Government of 1914, were not to be shaken from their support of General Franco's enemies. At the instigation of Great Britain, a Non-Intervention Committee was formed on which the principal interveners, Italy, Russia, and France, were solemnly represented. It was not an edifying spectacle and gave encouragement to no one but Hitler, who saw Great Britain involved for the hundredth time in a sterile policy of reluctant acquiescence in illegalities which were so open as to

be flagrant. The annexation of Austria would only be another illegality, and we should, he argued, undoubtedly acquiesce in that also.

The annexation was the most spectacular of all Hitler's *coups d'état*. The apparent enthusiasm with which he was greeted shocked, but also completely misled, the world. It appeared to localize the significance of the event, which was in fact to alter the course of history. Even the bitterest opponents of the Nazi regime criticized the *coup* mainly on the ground that it was opposed to the real wishes of the Austrian people. The significance, however, of the Austrian *coup* was military, not political. By annexing Austria Hitler turned the line of the Czechoslovakian defences. The unique military inexperience of the British and French political leaders at that time was perhaps responsible for the failure to appreciate this. Certainly our Foreign Office, which had anticipated the military collapse of Italy during the Abyssinian campaign and the defeat of General Franco in Spain, was either asking no military advice or getting advice which was bad. The press was little better informed, with the consequence that, when the Czechoslovakian crisis developed almost immediately afterwards, hardly any one seemed to be aware that the much-vaunted Czechoslovakian defences were, after the annexation of Austria, about as much use as the Maginot Line after the collapse of the front in northern France.

In May 1937 Mr. Baldwin had resigned, and had been succeeded by Mr. Neville Chamberlain. Mr. Baldwin's ill-fated second premiership had seen his public reputation fall to its lowest ebb at the time of the Hoare-Laval proposal, rise to its height at the time of the abdication of King Edward VIII and fall again rapidly as the consequences of his foreign policy became apparent. Despite his services to the cause of industrial peace, social security, and economic recovery, he bequeathed to his successor, who had shown his independence for the first time in his public career when he had insisted on the ending of sanctions against Italy (which he had called 'midsummer madness'), a divided country, a navy, army, and air force wholly inadequate to our responsibilities and a prestige in Europe vastly diminished by diplomatic defeats.

Only one major change in domestic policy had marked the six years of the Macdonald-Baldwin national governments, but that was a revolutionary one. A revenue tariff had been introduced immediately following on the general election of 1931, but in 1932, following on the Ottawa Conference, a complex system of imperial preference was introduced, and at the same time a great measure of protection was afforded to British agriculture by a wide variety of measures, including not only protective duties but quotas, subsidies, controlled marketing, and guaranteed prices. The chief credit for these far-reaching changes, which marked the first serious and successful efforts in the present century to promote inter-empire trade and to restore British agriculture, is usually given to Mr. Neville Chamberlain, who became Chancellor of the Exchequer when Mr. Snowden and a number of Liberals resigned from the coalition as the result of the Ottawa Conference and the decisions arising out of it. These decisions marked a definite step on the road to a planned economy. They reflected the first realization that the old Liberal economic order could not survive unchanged in a world where political considerations were driving nation after nation towards self-sufficiency, buttressed by bilateral trade agreements, and where, simultaneously, the State was expected to guarantee to all its citizens minimum standards of living. The Independent Liberals, as the group came to be known, remained unconverted either to planning or to tariffs, but after 1932 the tariff issue ceased to be controversial among the people at large, and the fact that the Liberals henceforward were committed to reversing the only wholly successful measures introduced by any party since 1929, condemned the Liberal party to progressive and rapid extinction as a political force.

It is sometimes said that the British tariff was itself one of the causes which drove Europe forward on the path to self-sufficiency and killed the multilateral trading system. It is far truer to say that that system was dying before the 1914 war and was killed by the peace treaties. It is difficult to see how the Western European economies could have continued to compete in the export market, as, but for the world wars, they would have had to do, with the industrialized nations of Asia

whose people were content with an infinitely lower standard of life. Secondly, it is absurd to suppose that Britain was going to remain indefinitely deaf to the crying needs of her agricultural workers and her farmers. Thirdly, the decline in the demand for British coal abroad was permanent, as was the loss, owing to technical progress, of the climatic advantage long enjoyed by Lancashire in the manufacture of cotton goods. These facts must have brought the British free-trade system in any case to an end. The peace treaties of 1919 introduced other factors all tending to drive the European nations in the direction of a greater or lesser degree of self-sufficiency. We tend to forget that in the nineteenth century the great continental empires, French, German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Turkish, were in fact roughly self-sufficient as regards the basic necessities of war and peace. Apart from oil, of which nineteenth-century diplomacy had taken small note, it was only the exceptional demands of a prolonged war on two fronts, and the shortage of manpower, which made the central powers vulnerable to our blockade between 1914 and 1918. The peace treaties changed all that. Russia lost corn and coal, but the Central European nations became one and all economically defenceless. They were therefore forced, by building up new industries behind tariff walls and by bilateral trade agreements, to assure themselves of regular supplies, or lose their hard-won independence. During the process of this rebuilding of the European economy, few countries had a hard or stable currency without which multilateral trading, as it had been known for a century, became almost impossible. It was only kept alive at a low and varying level by political money pumped into the European system in the form of credits, loans, or reparations, or, most ridiculous of all, loans to facilitate the payment of reparations or credits to facilitate the raising of loans.

The effect of the protective tariff, the empire preferences, and the measures for the relief of British agriculture were marked; they contradicted in every detail the lugubrious anticipation of the dissident minority of free traders. Unemployment in August 1932, the month of the Ottawa Conference, was almost at its peak at 2,947,000. From January 1933 the fall was

fairly continuous, subject to seasonal fluctuations, and by August 1939 had fallen to 1,203,000, almost exactly the figure at which it stood in 1929 when the Conservatives went out of office. Wages in 1938 as compared with 1924 had risen six points and the cost of living (which by all the rules of free-trade logic should have risen) had fallen nineteen points. Deposits in the Post Office and Trustee Savings Bank had risen in the same period from £387,000,000 to the then unprecedented total of £748,000,000. Industrial production was one-third higher in 1937 than in 1924. Another startling index of increased prosperity is provided by the membership figures of building societies which actually doubled between 1924 and 1935, while the share capital increased during the same period by 500 per cent. Finally, and relevantly to our present controversies, the annual average of houses built between 1934 and 1939 rose to the remarkable figure of 348,000. Mr. Chamberlain's cheap money policy, continued during Mr. Chamberlain's premiership by his successor, Sir Kingsley Wood, contributed substantially to the result.

In the course of this slow upward climb from bankruptcy to solvency, but when progress was still slow and there was a long way to go, there had been the general election of 1935, when, according to his own subsequent admission, Mr. Baldwin did not tell the full truth to the country about the need for rearmament and when, perhaps for that reason and perhaps in spite of it, he obtained a surprisingly large majority. This left the Socialist party, which now came under Mr. Attlee's gentle but persistent leadership, still a rather negligible minority in the House of Commons. Mr. Baldwin passed his own judgment on his conduct of the election by his self-imposed retirement from public life two years later. It remains doubtful whether Mr. Baldwin's decision had any real effect on the situation. Had he asked for a mandate for rearmament on a great scale he would probably have lost the election, but had he won it war could not have been averted. The trouble with Mr. Ramsay Macdonald and Mr. Baldwin was not that their foreign policy was wrong but that they had no policy. Precisely the same indictment lies against that of Mr. Baldwin's opponents both on the right and on the left. All the British statesmen

of that era made the same fundamental mistake of imagining that a foreign policy consists of the periodical utterance of elevated sentiments, after which, when they are ignored by the great powers, you either fight or you do not. This, heaven knows, was a sufficiently absurd conception, but even more absurd was the philosophy behind it, that if you shouted loud enough someone would listen to you. Our foreign policy failed in the thirties for precisely the same reason that it had failed in the twenties. We never made up our minds what it was we wanted and therefore we never prepared ourselves to get it. If we wished to stop Hitler without a war we had to pay blackmail either to Russia or to Italy. We had to sacrifice part of Abyssinia and possibly also Albania, or we had to sacrifice part of Poland and the Baltic Republics and probably a part of Rumania. If we were prepared to fight, we still could only fight, with any hope of securing our war aims, if we had a reliable ally, and France was not a reliable ally. She did not wish to fight and she was not, as we knew, prepared in any case to take the offensive, where lay the only hope of saving Poland in the event of a German attack in the east. The theory that you must apply to foreign policy a rigid code of political morals, and must not sacrifice the lesser for the greater good, is a theory which exalts the most appalling cruelty to the status of a virtue.

If you can save a world from ruin at the price of denying to two sparsely inhabited and recently conquered provinces of Abyssinia the privilege of being governed from Addis Ababa, have you, in fact, the right to refuse? The truth is that you cannot, in foreign policy, deal with each question as it arises on its merits. You cannot, and do not pretend to do so, in home affairs, and it passes the wit of man to understand why it should be considered sensible, or even sane, to do so in foreign affairs. Always in public affairs you have to consider what is possible, not what is desirable, and in a democratic age your choice of what is possible may be limited. Propaganda cannot be suddenly reversed. The argument that was applied to these matters in the thirties was less practical but needs consideration. If, it was said, we make the concession, who knows where it will end? We did, in fact, make every kind of concession and it ended in war. Does this provide any argument against

ever making any concessions? That is what we are asked to believe. It can only be said that, on that reading, peace can never be long preserved except in a world wholly subordinated to one ruler. That is the Russian creed. It is not ours.

There is really no great difficulty to be resolved. Our troubles in the thirties resulted from our neglect of the classical purpose of all foreign policy, never to let our aims outrun our capacity for achieving them. Beyond that point even the most moral and exalted of aims become immoral. What we deemed our virtue in the thirties was in fact our vice. We were uttering sentiments; we were not conducting a policy.

With the advent of Mr. Neville Chamberlain to power in 1937 there was an indecisive change. Mr. Chamberlain was a man of far greater decision of character than Mr. Baldwin, but he had, from the start, a hopeless hand to play, and he was a man who was tragically disinclined to take advice. He rejected an offer of consultation from Mr. Roosevelt and this led to Mr. Eden's resignation. He preferred the zealous but inexperienced counsel of Sir Horace Wilson to that of the Foreign Office. He never, unlike Mr. Baldwin before him or Mr. Winston Churchill after him, had any popular following in the country. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to suppose that there were great chances still open which were lost. These chances had been lost at Versailles, at Geneva in 1932, and at Stresa, if we are thinking of diplomatic opportunities, and in 1933 and 1936, if we are thinking of opportunities for an easy military victory. The confidence which the British press and people still felt, in 1937, in the military strength and political security of the Third Republic was not shared by any of her continental neighbours, north, south, or east. The economic and political situation of the United States precluded any hope of early or active military assistance from that quarter. The co-operation of Russia was a price which few states and fewer peoples were prepared to pay. The terrible disorder at Madrid and Barcelona (to put the case at the very lowest and in a way that admits of no dispute) had inspired no confidence, to say the least of it, in Russia as a potential guardian of the blessings of ordered, free,

progressive, and Christian civilization. There was thus, in 1937 or 1938, no support in Europe, outside certain elements in France, for an active anti-German policy. This was the situation as it existed at the time of the seizure of Austria and as it was known to the new British Government.

It is irrelevant to argue whether at that date appeasement was the right policy. Of course it was not. But there was no alternative policy which could at that date, and given the temper of France, have succeeded. The fatal errors had already been made, and not by Mr. Chamberlain. The criticism which can be justly levelled at the Chamberlain administration (although in fairness it must be remembered that all the facts are not yet known) are not on the matter of policy but on its execution. Short though the time was between the Austrian annexation and Munich, we should have put ourselves in the interval in a stronger diplomatic position by forming a really national government, by doubling the cadres of our expeditionary force (and not of our Territorial Army), and by a ship-building programme of an aggressive character. The expansion of our air force was quite insufficient. Our industry was not mobilized for war. If appeasement was to succeed, it would only be because the balance of forces rendered appeasement the most satisfactory policy for Germany as well as for ourselves. Further, the condition of appeasement, to repeat again what has been said several times before in this book, was that we should be ready to make definite concessions before they were asked for, before, that is, the granting of the concessions involved us in another and even more disastrous diplomatic defeat.

Had Mr. Chamberlain inherited the diplomatic position left to their successors by Lord Salisbury or Sir Edward Grey, or the military prestige built up by Mr. Lloyd George's first administration, or the national unity which Mr. Churchill secured in 1940, his policy need not, and in all human probability would not, have failed. Mr. Baldwin, however, for all his services to industrial peace, had destroyed our once immense prestige in Europe. The Czechoslovakian Government alone was sincerely friendly to our conception of a League-governed world, and the Czechoslovakian Government was itself a

minority government enjoying a far greater prestige at Geneva than at Prague.

It is nevertheless necessary to render tribute where tribute is due. Polemical writers suggest that we have to judge between Mr. Neville Chamberlain and the Tory policy of appeasement and the heroic Liberal-Labour stand to arms against Hitler. That is plain nonsense. There is, in fact, no choice between personalities or policies involved. The Neville Chamberlain who went to Munich in 1938 was the same Neville Chamberlain who took us into the war in 1939. That in so doing he did not enjoy the practical support, but only the lip-service, of the British Labour movement was Mr. Chamberlain's misfortune. It was certainly not his fault. The disgracefully insincere pretence of the Labour opposition, that Mr. Chamberlain even at the eleventh hour had to be forced into war by pressure from outside his Cabinet, should not require historical refutation. The claim of the Labour opposition, that they would have averted the war, is rendered meaningless by the disclosures of Russian and German documents. Russia and Germany were united in their determination to tear up the eastern frontiers of Europe, and Russia would never have come into the war except on the condition that she took half Poland, Finland, and the Baltic Republics and got special rights over Rumania. No British Government of any political complexion could have made these concessions to Russia in 1938 or 1939.

The action most likely to be debated in the history books is not Mr. Chamberlain's visit to Munich but the form of his guarantee to Poland. We were, of course, right in our decision to stand by Poland when Hitler added to the crime of Prague the crime of enslaving the Polish nation. But the form and nature of our pledge to Poland were alike ill calculated to save Poland. In the first place, we gave Poland a guarantee which was manifestly worthless as a guarantee of her frontiers. We could do, and did, nothing immediate for Poland, since the French were not prepared, and we knew it, to attack Germany by land or by air. Poland herself could not hold out three months. In the circumstances, our undertaking to Poland should have been limited to what we could strictly, immediately, and effectively fulfil. We should have undertaken to declare

and enforce a naval blockade of Germany, in which France would have co-operated with enthusiasm. Had we done this, we should have appeared before Europe, not as unsuccessful guarantors of a violated frontier, powerless to strike a blow on Poland's behalf, but as a nation using the strategic situation in the most effective manner possible to punish the aggressor.

So much for the content of our undertaking, which, given in this form, would have given us the first victory of the war, because the blockade could not, as we always knew, be broken by Germany. We should have heartened the neutral nations, impressed them with our courage and efficiency, and left the onus of beginning the war on land in Western Europe to Germany. This is in effect what we did, because we were obliged to do so. But we did it after declarations which made our actions appear inadequate and even derisory. Our policy, moreover, was extremely unpopular in France because it put on the French Government the onus of formally declaring war. In so doing, we divided France.

But if the matter of our undertaking to Poland was unfortunate, its manner was more so. The public character of our declaration and the violence of our press made it difficult for Germany to climb down, and as unlikely as possible that Poland would be anything but intransigent to the point of war. The whole world knew of our 'guarantee.' If Germany abated her demands on Poland she would, in the eyes of the world, have yielded to our superior force. Hitler, knowing perfectly well the situation in France, and knowing therefore that our force was not superior but very inferior, was the last person in the world likely to accept such a position. On the other hand, were the Poles clear that France had no intention of taking the offensive on land? Our intentions should have been conveyed in writing, in unmistakable terms, to Hitler, but they should not have been published to the world until the eleventh hour. War would still have come, but our intervention would then have come as a dramatic and welcome surprise to the neutral nations, instead of coming as a shattering anti-climax, which multiplied the 'fifth columns' in Scandinavia and Holland and postponed effective aid from the United States for more than a year.

The reasons which inspired Mr. Chamberlain's declaration were noble and generous. He wished to make it clear that there was no limit to the support which we were ready to give. We should do all that was possible. And he wished above all to be sure that the alleged mistake of 1914 was not to be repeated, and that Germany should be unable to say that she did not know of our intentions. He was, however, hopelessly misinformed as to the real strength both of the pacifists and of the militant Communists in France and the Low Countries. Nothing but an attack on France by Germany could have energized France in her own defence and the same was certainly true of Belgium. Our diplomacy made it necessary for Britain and France to take the initiative in declaring a war, and the declaration of war was intensely unpopular across the Channel. If our action meant, as it should have meant, the seizure of the military initiative in the West, it would have been wise, far-sighted, and decisive; but the French were not prepared to take the initiative and we had no adequately trained forces available. As things were, the course we adopted had every conceivable disadvantage. It made war more, not less, likely; it disturbed and weakened our one possible ally, and it condemned the British and French Armies to many months of demoralizing inaction, months during which Communist propaganda made deadly inroads on the morale of the French forces.

All arguments really return to this point. Neither at the time of Munich, nor at the time of Prague, nor in September 1939, was France resolute, well armed, united, or willing to fight a great offensive battle against Germany without Russia as an ally. Russia had no intention of allying herself with France against Germany except on terms which neither France nor Great Britain could accept. In effect, Great Britain and France would have found themselves at any of these dates faced by a Russo-German alliance. Given our own lack of military effectives and the political state of the French Army and Government, the result would in all human probability have been the same. A small island power without a trained national army cannot engage in continental warfare without a strong and resolute continental ally. Neither in 1938 nor in

1939 had we such an ally. For attempting the impossible we paid an immensely heavy price and shall continue to pay it for generations. So will the rest of the world. That price is the measure of the responsibility of the pre-war statesmen, all of whom (excepting Mr. Winston Churchill and Lord Salisbury, who were then leaders without a party) were guilty of the same fundamental error of judgment.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1950: *ENGLAND AS A WORLD POWER*

THE POSITION of Great Britain as a world power was made more perilous than at any time in modern history by our defeat in the continental war which began on 3rd September 1939, and ended with the battle of France in the summer of 1940. Our defeat was total, involving the ruin of the two countries Poland and Rumania, on whose behalf we had entered the war, the complete destruction of the offensive power of our land forces, the occupation by our enemy of France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, and Norway, and the close blockade of our own shores, following the loss of the Channel ports and the Channel Islands. Had the last war been fought under the same conditions as the Napoleonic wars, or even the war of 1914, the consequences of the battle of France would certainly have been modified, and might have been wiped out, by the military victory of the United States, Great Britain, and Russia over Germany in the second war, which began on 22nd June 1941 and ended on 8th May 1945. There were, however, two decisive differences in the strategic situation in 1945 as compared with that prevailing at any previous time in modern European history. Russia, for the first time since the days of Peter the Great, felt herself both politically prepared and materially equipped to attempt the domination of Europe; secondly, the development of self-propelled missile weapons had created a situation in which the occupation of the Channel coast line by an enemy would no longer be merely a very dangerous threat to our sea communications and a half-open door to invasion, but a lethal blow to which there is, as yet, no known reply. After 1940 we could for a brief time, and we did, 'stand alone.' In the conditions prevailing since 1945 we could not do so. Our survival in the next war will depend not

on the collaboration of France, the Low Countries, and Scandinavia in the defence of the Rhine frontier, but on their moral and material ability to cross that frontier and carry the war far into the territory at present dominated by our potential enemy. In the light of these facts, we can assess the loss inflicted on the British people by the defeat of their continental allies in 1940. That defeat has left France and the Low Countries deeply divided politically, with mere majorities still ready to share responsibility for the defence of Western Europe against Russia and with powerful and determined minorities preparing to sabotage that defence. Worse still, there is, among all shades of political opinion on the Continent, a distrust of British diplomacy, financial stability, and military efficiency.

The leadership of the Atlantic Powers must ultimately have passed in any event to the North American peoples. That was an historical necessity. We must, however, realize that that leadership, to-day so strongly asserted and so generously maintained, offers by itself no solution to the problem of Western European defence, and that without effective Western European defence there can be no defence of Great Britain.

We do not propose to discuss whether (or, more properly, how) the situation which arose out of the military defeat of Germany, and the destruction of her economy in the summer of 1945, could have been avoided.¹ The demand for 'unconditional surrender,' the refusal of the United States to co-operate in a strong military incursion into Eastern Europe through the Balkans, and the diplomatic agreements entered into at Yalta which led (as should have been, and in some quarters was, anticipated) to the destruction of Poland, the partition of Germany, and a deadly threat to Czechoslovakia—all these matters are already the subject of controversy and will so remain for many years. Sidelights on these decisions have been thrown by the Hopkins papers, so brilliantly edited by his friend, Robert Sherwood, and by Mr. Winston Churchill's still incomplete account of the last war. The full story, however, will not be told in our lifetime and, in view of the highly personal diplomacy of the White House in President Roosevelt's time,

¹ That question belongs to the military and diplomatic history of the Second World War, which cannot yet be written.

we may never know the real reasons which led the western allies to these decisions or the consequences which they expected to follow from them. In any case, before an historical judgment can be formed, it will be necessary for the Russian archives also to be opened.

The historical section of this book ended, for this reason, with the outbreak of war in 1939, and, even then, with the warning that many judgments in respect of the previous ten years of the diplomatic history of Europe must be provisional. Unfortunately, while the reasons which led to the creation of the present situation in Europe—for it was created and did not flow inevitably from the military events—are not clearly known, the consequences are clear enough, and we have to live with them, and, if possible, to survive them. It will not be easy, because of the simultaneous weakening of our position in Asia. Owing partly to our defeats at the hands of Japan in 1942, partly to the policies of all the great powers towards China since 1919, and most of all, perhaps, to our own vacillations in dealing with India and Palestine since 1919, the decline of British prestige in the East has been as rapid as the decline of British power.

The chief difficulty, both in India and in Palestine, during the last thirty years has been the attitude of the United States towards what Americans call 'British imperialism.' Our position as a great Asiatic power was not fatally prejudiced by the First World War. Our prestige was shaken by our defeats at the hands of Turkey in Gallipoli, Palestine, and Mesopotamia, but we recovered from these misadventures and, as the sponsors of the new Arab states of Iraq, Transjordan, and, later, Saudi-Arabia, we earned much goodwill in the Moslem world. Nor was India hostile to the British association in 1919. India had made an immense voluntary contribution to the allied victories and her troops had fought on all fronts not only with skill but with enthusiasm. The year 1919 was the time to reach a solution of the problem of Indian self-government, but it was always certain that no solution, given the communal difficulty, would be an agreed one. We were committed by our age-long policy of westernization to a democratic solution, and this solution was incompatible with the facts of the case; the Moslem

minority would never accept permanent subordination to the Hindu Raj, nor were the Hindus prepared to accept, of their own freewill, either the partition of India or a system of separate franchises such as would effectively prevent the subordination of the Moslem minority to the Hindu majority. Our position, nevertheless, was really strong because it conformed to the reality of the services we had rendered, and were still rendering, to the Indian peoples. The great volunteer armies raised in India between 1914 and 1919 showed that there was no popular hostility to our rule. But for the vocal opposition of the Indian political classes and the risk that their opposition might deeply disturb our relations with the United States, we could have imposed a federal solution on India in 1919, and given such a federation 'dominion status.' As it was, we pursued for another twenty years the vain hope of an agreed solution and ended by abandoning India to her own devices. For the historic maxim of *real politik* which had served the Roman Empire so well, Mr. Attlee found a curious substitute, 'divide and quit.' Mr. Attlee adopted the same novel policy, albeit with more excuse, in Palestine and, with no excuse at all, in Burma. These decisions belong to the past; by the time they were made, they had become inevitable, and they are not reversible; only their consequences remain. It is no consolation to Great Britain to note that the problems which we have imposed on ourselves through our irresolution, and through our loss of belief in our title to determine events, have been gravely aggravated by the parallel collapse of the United States' policy towards China.

The progress of China towards catastrophe dates, like our own Indian difficulties, from 1919 when the Nine-Power Conference in Washington agreed on the policy of non-intervention in China in the belief that the political heirs of Sun Yat-Sen, if left to themselves, would quickly confer on the 450,000,000 people of China the blessings of parliamentary rule, freedom, and order. It was, in fact, always clear that if Europe and America disinterested themselves in China, the residuary legatees of our influence and of our interests would be the Japanese or the Russians. The Russians, as we have seen, were first off the mark, and had in fact, in the early twenties,

virtually annexed outer Mongolia and much of Chinese Turkistan before any one noticed the fact. Since there was no effective central government in China at that time the annexation never became an international issue. It was otherwise with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and with their later armed incursion into the Yangtse valley. China, which for many years subsequent to 1919 had been in the hands of rival war lords, came to some measure of unity once the pressure came from east and west simultaneously. Such government as there was came under the power of Chiang Kai-Shek and his wife and brother-in-law, who belonged to a merchant family of great wealth and influence. As the only available figure, Chiang Kai-Shek became to the western powers the representative of China when Japan declared war on the U.S.A. and China figured for a brief time as a nominally co-equal party in the long-forgotten four-power alliance of Great Britain, Russia, China, and the United States.

The situation, if it had not been tragic, would have had most of the ingredients of farce. Chiang Kai-Shek was not only militarily powerless but was by political conviction a convinced anti-democrat. He was also quite uninterested in fighting the Japanese. When it became obvious, after the war, to which his contribution was essentially negative, that his power could not be sustained without the permanent garrisoning of China by the United States and that, even then, such garrisoning would come down, in effect, to the partition of China between Russia and the western allies, the United States decided to leave China as quickly as the British had left India. The new Chinese war lord, armed and presumably financed by Russia, marches under the banner of Communism. Whether he is, in fact, any more than the latest in the long succession of war lords, who have dominated great tracts of Chinese territory since 1919 with the tacit approval of one or other of the interested powers, is as yet unknown. What is certain is that such government, and such military power, as exists in China to-day is hostile to Western Europe, is at present engaged in strangling what remains of British trade in China, and will probably soon expropriate our numerous properties. A Chinese Communist army is at the gates of Hong Kong and on, if not across, the

frontiers of French-Indo China, and her agents are actively attempting ¹ the conquest by armed force of southern Korea, and fomenting rebellion in Malaya and Indonesia.

This situation would be less threatening if there were still in south-east Asia a strongly armed, stable, and united India, with the resources of the British Empire behind her. As it is, India is threatened with civil war, and the military value of the Indian and Pakistan armies, without British industry behind them, and without British munitions, equipment, and leadership, is an unknown quantity. India, moreover, cannot but be exposed to dangerous political influences from China and from Burma, both under Communist control. The experience of the United States in Korea and our own experience in Malaya, as of the French in Indo-China and the Dutch in Indonesia, suggest that there are forces at work in Asia which might easily prevent India and Pakistan, even if their differences were settled, from acting effectively in their own defence. We certainly cannot look to either of these new dominions for assistance in the settlement of problems outside their borders.

These problems are of vital concern to the survival of Western Europe. The economy of Great Britain and Holland, and the financial and political stability of France, are alike involved. Great Britain in particular relies, and has always relied, on sterling exports from south-east Asia to balance her accounts with the primary producing countries from which she draws her food supplies. On our ability to do this depends the British standard of living. Without our eastern trade these islands could never have supported anything approaching 40,000,000 people except at a very low subsistence level, nor, without their economic resources, could we afford the armaments necessary to our independence in a hostile world.

There is no easy cure for this situation by granting self-government, or virtual or actual independence, to our remaining possessions. The situation in India and Pakistan is grave to the point of hazard, yet these were countries not only already westernized in thought, language, and institutions, but already highly industrialized. If these new dominions preserve their

¹ July 1950.

prosperity and their independence it will be because, in addition to being themselves heirs of two high civilizations, they have been under western government for much more than a century and have made their own a great deal of western political thought and social science and almost the whole of the material equipment of European civilization. Unfortunately, the present generation in Great Britain, as in the United States, is being taught to regard our departure from the Indian peninsular as our first and only service to its 350,000,000 people. It is true that the United States have learnt the reality of the Communist danger in southern Asia and that the British people have at last begun to understand that the exports of Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, and Indo-China, to say nothing of India and Pakistan, must go to support not the Russian but the Western European economy. It is, however, with divided minds and feeble hearts that the post-war generation gingerly takes up the burden of rule in these distant territories. If we go on as at present it will not be long before we learn at a disastrous cost that divided minds and feeble hearts cannot rule.

'Rule' is the operative word. The terrible tragedy of China, where more than 35,000,000 people have fallen victims, since Sun Yat-Sen proclaimed the new dawn in China in 1910, to fire, sword, and starvation, has been almost entirely due to the lack among the Chinese themselves of any will to rule and to the inability of the western powers to agree upon any alternative arrangements for ensuring to the most gifted of all the Asiatic people the one prerequisite of peace and progress which they notably lack, the maintenance of order. The fate of China threatens to-day many territories in south-east Asia.

We have no working alternative to remaining a great power. The misery which our people would suffer if we lost our empire, and the ruin in which the collapse of our power would involve Western Europe, would both be so great that no man of honour can propose that we abdicate from our remaining responsibilities. If we say nothing of the misery that, in so doing, we should impose on the peoples over whom we rule, it is because it is no longer 'good form' to rule. The modern world suffers from the craven fear of being great, except, of course, in speech. The great speech and the noble gesture are still fashionable

because they bring in their train the sweet incense of popular applause, but above all because they are easy and cheap. The limousine can wait while they are performed. If, however, it has been a gratification to the politicians of the twentieth century to have been assured for so long that they can best discharge the responsibilities by laying aside the burden of empire, they know to-day that the point has been reached when the burden must be reassumed. Great Britain, France, and the United States need to keep substantial ground forces in the Far East for many years, and this necessity will be extremely displeasing to the electorates of these great democracies. The western world, however, cannot afford a succession of events such as the invasion of southern Korea, an event which will, we must hope, at last convince the statesmen of the West that the frontiers of democracy cannot be defended by air power or on the principle of limited liability. Perhaps we may now expect, what is certainly required, a far plainer declaration by the Western European powers and the United States that they propose to maintain the *status quo* in Asia, if necessary by force, for an indefinite period, but certainly for the next twenty-five years, and that they will maintain sufficient troops, ships, and aeroplanes for the purpose. Apart altogether from Korea, such a declaration would quickly stabilize the situation in Malaya, and would have great and immediate repercussions in India, Pakistan, and China.

The democratic problem is, *au fond*, the same as that posed by Sir Eyre Crowe in his memorandum to the League of Nations in 1918. Sovereigns can abdicate; sovereign democracies cannot. Therefore, they must change their minds or perish. Nothing, however, is harder than for a generation nourished on a particular philosophy to admit that it has been nourished on a misapprehension. Liberals and Progressives all over the world have been taught at their mother's knee that a free government is better than a good government and that the exercise of authority by one nation over the territory of another is a denial of fundamental human rights. In terms of the western world both these statements are no doubt broadly true, but they are quite untrue in any other terms. The essence of the western concept of nationhood is that the nation-

state is a working compromise, usually very painfully achieved as the result of a long historical process, between the claims of race, the needs of government, and the facts of geography and economics. Precisely because it is a delicate and subtle compromise, the western nation-state has a right to be treated as sacrosanct, and, precisely because it represents a working balance of forces, any attempt to deny freedom of choice to its citizens in the matter of government is, *ex hypothesi*, not an attempt to establish order but an attempt for selfish and sectional ends to overthrow it. The tragedy of the last fifty years has been that the ascendant liberalism of the western world has dealt with its Asiatic problems on the assumption that the peoples of Asia (and, for that matter, the indigenous peoples of Africa) are at the same stage in the historical process as the nation-states of Western Europe. It is not true.

All the necessary compromises have still to be worked out in Asia and central Africa, and by removing the chief force making for peace, progress, and order in Asia we have not speeded up but vastly delayed the slow progress of the Asiatic peoples towards nationhood. This point requires far more careful study than it is to-day receiving, because our weakness in Asia has been primarily due to honourable but utterly mistaken doubts as to our right to be there at all. Perhaps the Malayan situation may serve the British, as the Korean situation may serve the United States, at the eleventh hour, as an object lesson, because even the most purblind must see that if we abandon Malaya, we shall be giving it up not to the Malays but to Chinese immigrants who arrived there long after we did ourselves, and without even the sentimental justification of the Jewish immigrants into Palestine that they were returning to what had been their home two thousand years ago.

The logic of events, if not the logic of facts, has at last begun to produce a change in the public opinion of the United States, but it is only a beginning. There is still an irrational belief that the mere declaration of a juridical status can create a nation overnight and that such a creation will acquire overnight the energies necessary to its progress. Challenged to rationalize this peculiar belief, the American Liberal replies that everything must begin somewhere. Because the great power

and genius of the United States had their immediate origin in a rebellion against a European government, the heirs of that rebellion imagine that the same specific in Indonesia or Malaya, or for that matter in India and Pakistan, will produce the same astonishing results. The analogy is generous in intention but hopelessly fallacious. The true analogy would demand the return of the citizens of the United States to their European homelands and the handing back of North America to the Indians!¹ The western world, whose governments derive their authority from public opinion, cannot, however, afford to treat this North American viewpoint as academic, still less as frivolous; it is part of the world's public opinion in regard to Asia and its problems, and unless that public opinion can be changed the western world will not survive.

We have seen in the consequences of the Yalta agreement the fatal and deeply dishonouring consequences that follow from imputing western ideas and morality to an oriental despotism. Consequences hardly less fatal have followed from the policy of non-intervention in China, which it is now too late to reverse. The position *vis-à-vis* Russia of the English-speaking peoples to-day depends on ensuring that we do not now abandon the rest of Asia to its fate.

That indispensable condition of our survival as a great power must condition our policy both at home and abroad. At home we must not impose on ourselves any policies which are incompatible with the maintenance of adequate military forces in the Far East. We must also remember that we cannot remain an Asiatic power unless we remain a Mediterranean power. We must, therefore, maintain, or re-establish, close and friendly relations with Greece, Turkey, Italy, and the Iberian peninsular and maintain our treaty rights and relationships in the Suez Canal zone and in the Middle East. Manifestly, such military and financial assistance as is required by Greece and Turkey

¹ I greatly surprised a very angry New York Liberal in 1949 by pointing out that the Dutch had a greater right in Indonesia than he had in New York, which was founded by the Dutch long after they had founded their settlements in Indonesia. The only reason why there was an Indonesian problem but no American-Indian problem was that the Dutch in Indonesia had not, like the Europeans on the eastern seaboard of North America, exterminated or removed the aboriginal inhabitants.

will have to be furnished in present circumstances by the United States, but with all those countries, whose friendship is essential to the security of our communication with the East, we must ourselves be friendly. The old and necessary tradition that the governments of friendly states are not made the subject of public attack or scurrilous references in the press, must once more be observed. We have been indulging too long in the habit of 'killing Kruger with our mouths.' It is necessary for democracies to be sufficiently adult to realize that those countries whose regimes they conscientiously dislike, dislike our own regime with equal sincerity. International good manners may be as important to us in the long run as anything else. Nothing can isolate a great power more completely than a constant display of moral indignation unaccompanied by action. When we continue to expect favours from the country which is the object of our censures, we create a feeling of nausea.

We have a long and difficult row to hoe. We shall need, before we can feel even tolerably secure, the goodwill and generosity of all the peoples of Western Europe. These things are not ours by right. We have at least to try to deserve them. The traditions of dissent are very strong in England, and particularly in the Labour movement. The belief that they alone had the secret of salvation and the favour of the Almighty was long the strength of the Puritans and after them of the Liberal-Nonconformists. To that feeling the Labour Socialist party are heirs. From it they derive great strength and almost the whole of such popular support as they enjoy (apart from the support of the revolutionaries who are with them for lack of anything nearer to Moscow). Very real difficulty arises, none the less, from the lack of sympathy between the heirs of dissent, and the same is true of the evangelicals within the Establishment, and the dominant religious institution on the Continent, the Roman Catholic Church. So long as we have a Labour Socialist government we have the fortunately rare situation when the best elements in the governments on either side of the Channel are the most opposed to each other. The Lloyd George of 1919 and the Briand of 1919 could work easily together. It is far less easy for the disciples of Mr. J. B. Priestley to develop a great warmth of real fellow-feeling for the disciples of M. Mauriac.

The formal statement on European unity by the National Executive Committee of the British Labour party issued in June of this year is of far greater importance in this connection than in its bearing on the so-called Schuman Plan for the organization of the Western European iron and steel trades. What shines most clearly through this very able document is that the great new Catholic democratic parties, which are to-day the largest parties in Holland, Belgium, France, Italy, and Western Germany, are profoundly distrusted by the British Labour party. Despite the plain fact that these parties stand in many respects further to the left than the Socialist Government of Great Britain, they are regarded as constituting 'a permanent anti-socialist majority' in western continental Europe, and as such bound to 'arouse the hostility of European workers.'¹ It would have seemed more sensible to inquire whether the hostility of European workers might not rather be aroused by the refusal of the British Government to enter into agreements with European Governments unless they be minority governments representing not the majority views of their own electorates, but the views of Transport House in London.

So long as our wisest policy was splendid isolation, and even when that policy was changed, rightly or wrongly, into a defensive military alliance with France, the intellectual isolation of Great Britain in Europe was no great matter. Now that joint action by the free peoples of Europe is vital, and when our own frontier lies far beyond the Rhine, this intellectual isolation is a matter of concern, particularly now that we have so little to offer to our allies by comparison with what we possessed only twenty-five years ago. We cannot prudently rely on economic pressure from the United States to keep Western Europe together in an uneasy coalition against Russia and her satellites. An uneasy coalition will go down to defeat. Unfortunately this reliance on American pressure to provide us with allies is a tempting escape from the realities of a situation which calls for a number of difficult decisions in which Great Britain will have to take the lead.

¹ *European Unity: a Statement by the National Executive of the British Labour Party* (published by the Labour party, Transport House, June 1950).

The diplomatic problem which must be solved for Europe if we are to survive is not the problem of bridging a gap or filling up an interval of time with emergency security measures; what has to be done is to bring about a permanent balance of forces. It will be a long time before this country is self-supporting economically, and it will be some years before Western Europe can face Russia and her satellites with the consciousness of being in the last resort at least as much master of her destiny as was the Triple Entente facing the Triple Alliance in the years before 1914. That must, however, be the ultimate objective of our defence policy and of the diplomacy which must subserve it.

The alternative view has only to be stated to be rejected.

In 1914 a strong Britain, a still resolute and wealthy France, weakened but not by any means rendered impotent by faction, needed mainly economic assistance from the United States to defeat the central powers. In 1939 a much poorer but still powerful British Commonwealth and a France bankrupt alike of moral and material resources went down to defeat and could only be saved by full-scale American military intervention. Are we really to expect, as the logical end of this story, a world where a weak Britain and a still weaker France are wholly dependent militarily on the United States, not merely for victory in war, but for their very existence in peace-time as independent powers? Those who think thus are looking to a future which must be disastrous not only to ourselves but to the world, and for this reason. Western Europe is to-day a heavy liability to the United States, but it is a liability which, with great courage and statesmanship, the United States Government have accepted, because, as trustees for the interests of their people, they see in Western Europe a potential asset which has only to be nursed back to health and strength to ensure the survival of freedom in the world. If Western Europe, on the other hand, were to prove a permanent liability it would also prove, inevitably, to be an ever-increasing one; the political and economic decline of nations can never be merely arrested. Unless there is a positive recovery of moral energy, the process of decline will continue at an ever-increasing tempo. Should this happen to Europe, the government

of the United States would inevitably withdraw from her all economic and military support. As the sole surviving trustees for the fortunes of democracy the United States could not afford to weaken themselves in the face of possible aggression.

If this argument be accepted, it follows that our position as a great power depends on the economic recovery of Western Europe as a whole, and that our foreign policy must be directed, in collaboration with the other free peoples of Europe, to re-establishing a real balance of military power between Western Europe and the U.S.S.R. It is useless to build a network of weak satellite states dependent on the charity of the United States. We need an organized and articulated European association or alliance, planned on lines which will make it viable as a military-political force. The military base of the European commonwealth would, in the event of a shooting war, be in Africa; it follows that the European alliance or association must, if it is to be capable of effective defence, include Turkey and the Iberian peninsula, for Turkey and Spain would be the twin bastions on which the defence of Africa would rest. Further, there is the question of manpower—a question which at once brings into the forefront the political future of Western Germany. When, therefore, we read of military and political understandings which are confined to Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands, we are reading of what may well be the most appropriate first steps to the restoration of Europe, but of steps which by themselves will only lead us back to Dunkirk. The strategists must keep economics well to the front in their appreciation of the situation. The politicians must, as a matter of military necessity, face the political problems of Spain and Germany.

We have deliberately begun our consideration of Great Britain's European problem by considering the political conditions of any effective defence of Europe, rather than by considering what is the threat we have to meet, because much the greatest threat to the peace of Europe is the present economic and military weakness of the Western European powers. If any great power is allowed to achieve the conquest of Europe without effort, then, sooner or later, whether she march under the inspiration of the Cross or the Crescent or the Hammer and

Sickle, she will do so. Granted that the rulers of Russia sincerely believe that the good fortune of mankind is bound up with the spread of Communism, any fair-minded man is bound to say that, from the Russian point of view, Russia has been right in everything she has done so far. She was given the opportunity, without firing a shot, to impose on a large number of countries and on 110,000,000 people, institutions and a way of life which seem to Russia not merely good, but to comprise the only possible good available to mankind in the technological age. Naturally Russia has done so. Most, if not all, of the incalculable evils of these times have followed from the as yet inexplicable guess (for it was no more than that) that Russia would not do so. The grave danger of the present hour is that there are still, all over Europe, so many people who do not realize that, so long as opportunity offers, Russia will continue to suborn governments and impose her system by the technique of the cold war on still further millions of mankind. Russia will go on as long as she can, and she will stop when she is stopped.

There is no more foolish question than the question, 'Will there be war?' It not only betrays culpable ignorance of the fact that the war of Russia against the West began in 1939, with the signature of the pact with Germany, but it betrays an ignorance, less culpable but certainly (since it affects the future) more dangerous, of the relation between war and foreign policy. The bloodless triumphs of Russia in recent years have been due to the fact that she alone—the United States not excepted—has for years past known exactly what she was doing. The object of every foreign policy is the same—to impose your will without going to war on the governments of other countries in regard to those of their activities which affect your own people. The old diplomacy had to deal with established governments in the hands of a ruling class, and with free, interdependent economies not subject to extensive government control. The activities of governments did not, for this reason, affect other countries nearly as often nor as gravely as they do to-day. Colonial rivalry, disputes about jurisdiction, and problems arising out of the break-up of worn-out political systems such as the Turkish or Austrian empires were the chief causes of international tension up to 1914. Since Great Britain was one of

the first in the field in the race for colonies, she had in practice no unsatisfied demands by the end of the century: since she was an island, she had fewer frontier problems, and therefore fewer disputes over jurisdiction (although the war with the Dutch Republics showed that she was no more pacific in these matters than the continental powers); finally, the grave problems arising out of the collapse of the Turkish Empire and the weakness of the Dual Monarchy did not directly affect Great Britain. It was for these reasons that British foreign policy was essentially negative in its aims during the century preceding 1914. Our ultimate objectives were the preservation of a balance of power in Europe and the security of our imperial communications. The two objectives were really one, since our interest in the continental balance of power was to ensure that no predominant military power occupied the Channel ports or dominated the Mediterranean and so menaced our control of the narrow seas. The policy was right, and it preserved the peace of the world for a century. Unfortunately it gave rise to a false doctrine, that the object of foreign policy was peace, and that as long as a dispute was peacefully settled it was largely immaterial what the nature of the settlement was. This doctrine led, as we have seen between the wars, to a situation in which we were unable to have a foreign policy—in which, in other words, we were unable to influence in any way the policies of the powers whose activities were most likely to affect our own well-being. This breakdown of our foreign policy led inevitably to war, but, even more unfortunately, the same error of logic which had led us to forget the true objective of foreign policy led us to forget the true purpose of war, which is not to destroy your enemy but to impose your will on him by force when you have failed to do so by diplomatic means. It follows that the purpose of a war strategy is to impose your will with the minimum of effort and the minimum of destruction. This is no new discovery, but the immense increase in the range and power of modern weapons has given it a vastly increased importance which Russia alone has so far fully understood. Hence her reversion to the war of the cloak and dagger and her change of objective. She no longer seeks to conquer peoples but to suborn governments.

The answer to the question whether Russia means to go to war is therefore clear. She is already at war, but is using a superior technique, and she will not—unless she loses her sanity—of her own volition revert to the 1939-45 technique of the war of destruction, which sought to impose the will of the war-maker by the physical occupation of territory but could only achieve such occupation by the total destruction of the enemy's country. We are, in fact, faced with a new and brilliant technique of war, devised and calculated to meet new conditions, and to resolve the insoluble dilemma created by the strategy of destruction, that in achieving victory you rob yourself of its fruits. You cannot save a people from oppression by destroying their homeland, or impose your will on a heap of ruins.

It is important at this point to pause and inquire as to the new conditions which have made the cold war a practical possibility to Russia. The answer lies in the character of the new ruling class in Europe, the new aristocracy of the pen and the desk, the *déracinés*, the *arrivistes*, and the clerks—the clerks who know only their paymaster, the *arrivistes* who know only their destination, and the *déracinés* who hate only their own country and their own house.

The English-speaking people are by no means saved from the humiliation and dishonour of having some such men in the seats of the mighty, but they are so far saved from the more shameful consequences by that unique invention of the Anglo-Saxon political genius, the two-party system, which requires of those who wish to enjoy the spoils of office a rigid and unswerving loyalty over a long period of years to publicly declared principles. These principles moreover must, under our political system, be such as to commend themselves to the generality of our people, who remain simple and good at heart—much liable to be misled in their measurement of the opportunities for ease and wealth which the modern world affords, but certainly not prepared to tolerate the rule of the secret police or the subordination of their country to foreign gangsters. The two-party system, as the Russians have been quick to observe, does not exist east of the English Channel. Unfortunately, it is also true that the destruction of the old governing classes, the general

weakening of the social fabric, and the decay of public, if not of private, morality, has gone much further on the Continent than among the English-speaking peoples. There is hardly a country in Europe, and certainly none in Asia, where the Russians could not find, and without serious difficulty, sufficient public men ready, in pursuit of their own advantage, to act in the interests of the Cominform and form a satellite government, or a sufficiency of clerks and placemen ready to work for such a government. That is something wholly new in history. Too many men everywhere have lost their faith in the destiny and the title-deeds of the society, be it Church or State, to which they owe nominal allegiance.

Too often we forget that labels mean nothing. Europe to-day is full of Radicals, Liberals, Progressives, and Radical Socialists, but none of these labels mean in Europe what they mean to us. These men are not the political heirs of Lord Grey of the Reform Bill or even of Mr. Lloyd George. Most of them, like our own fellow travellers, differ from the Cominform only in their wish to see a slightly different kind of near-Communist, international Socialism substituted for the free nation, the free family, and the free Church; they thus have no incentive to offer an effective resistance to the cold war. These men may not initiate the *coup* which destroys the freedom of the people, but they will inevitably (and, from their own point of view, perhaps rightly) acquiesce in it. All over Europe there are, sometimes in office, sometimes in power, men of this kind and, even in the British House of Commons, and, still more vocal, in the ranks of the Labour party outside Parliament, are those who say that it is only with men of this kind that we should collaborate on the Continent. Such a collaboration would complete the disintegration, political and moral, of the free society without substituting for the incentives which operate among free men the ruthless machinery of oppression which is at the disposal of truly totalitarian Communist dictatorships. It would, therefore, fail, and the Russians would pursue their cold war to a victorious and bloodless conclusion. This in turn would inevitably lead to a destructive and probably fatal shooting war in which the English-speaking peoples would be forced to attempt the liberation of Europe at the price of the

destruction of Europe. It can thus be said, without qualification, that if we attempt the path of appeasement and acquiesce in the extension of the cold war, a shooting war cannot be avoided. The survival of Western Europe and the security of the English-speaking peoples all over the world depend on holding the Russian cold war offensive north of the Danube and east of the Rhine.

The basis of resistance to the cold war must first of all be moral and religious. Western Europe has to recover her belief in her destiny and her belief in the viability of free institutions before she will defend them, and this belief derives from and can only be energized by a renewal of faith in the supernatural nature and destiny of man. But faith without works is vain, we have been truly informed. Those fighting the political battle for freedom must know that they have behind them not only the sympathy but the armed diplomacy of the rest of the free world, and the arms must be suited to the tactical requirements. You cannot avert a gangsters' *coup* in a great industrial city by dropping bombs and killing off the people you wish to save.

It is probable that the moral and political regeneration of Western Europe and the first steps towards a working political association of its component nation-states will far precede economic recovery. This will be the danger period, before any effective balance of real power has been restored. It will be during this danger period that the cold war will be pressed forward at every available opportunity. The day before yesterday it was France; yesterday it was Italy; to-morrow it may be France again. Western Europe must be armed to fight the cold war with cold war weapons. The shooting war is not merely a desperate and costly remedy: it is no remedy at all. The atom bomb may save Europe from a fate worse than death, but it cannot save Europe from death. It is fortunately very possible that the prompt organization of an effective defence system for Western Europe may itself be sufficient to arrest the cold war, but the operative word is 'effective.' The bomber is not an effective weapon against the secret police and the cloak-and-dagger war. The only effective defence is the presence of an adequate number of fully trained and fully

mobilized airborne, mechanized, and motorized divisions on the Rhine frontier. What the appropriate number may be is a matter for the military experts. The general view is that a force of eighteen to twenty divisions would be sufficient for Western Europe. It is common ground between military and civilian that had such a force, or even a force half the size, been available three years ago, Czechoslovakia would be still a free country, while the Berlin blockade would certainly never have taken place. The reason why this force—a tiny contribution to expect from the United States, the British Commonwealth and Empire, France and the French Colonial Empire, Holland, Belgium, Norway, Denmark, Luxembourg, and Italy—has never been available is the same reason which will make it a complete answer to the cold war when it is. Nothing has been done because we do not yet understand either the international situation or the cold war, and the cold war will cease to be a menace once our action makes it plain that we understand both.

The general staffs think instinctively in terms of the shooting war. Twenty full-strength divisions, they say, mean not less than 2,000,000 men behind the lines to keep them in the field. They have in mind, naturally enough, the immense air force and the supporting artillery, the men on the long lines of communication, the vast movements of oil, munitions, and food which have to be allowed for, and the reinforcements for all arms on the line of communications and at the base; they further look at the immense auxiliary forces of police, intelligence, medical services, canteens, entertainment officers, laundry officers, and so forth, which to-day swell the size of what would have been a very small army group in 1914 to a vast, unmanageable, and certainly immobilizable mob of men, women, and boys of all ages, ranks, and occupations. Those of us who have observed three wars in the last half-century are well aware of the geometric progression which appears to govern the numerical relationship between the fighting line and the men who live in relative comfort and safety in order to ensure that the fighting line shall fight. We are thus forced to agree, on the assumption that the ratio of non-fighting to fighting troops is going to continue to increase at the same

speed as since the South African War, that in the next shooting war it will probably take not 2,000,000 but 4,000,000 men to keep twenty powerful divisions in the field.

A lot of this behind-the-line organization is clearly unnecessary even in a shooting war. You can easily be so cautious, in insisting on a vast supporting framework for your spearhead, that in fact you reduce your spearhead to the point where it is unable to penetrate the defences opposed to it, or at least to the point where it takes so long to do it that the very efficiency of your behind-the-line organization adds greatly to the risks (for, in war, time is the greatest of all risks), the cost, and the suffering. But we are not here considering a shooting war. We are considering the cold war, which is essentially a policing operation. If we had had across the Czechoslovakian frontier a powerful mobile police army the Russian *coup* would not have been attempted because it would certainly have failed. The moment the Russians know that we are awake to what is going on, they will cease to attempt cold war operations, except where they have so much genuine support in a country that the ability of the western allies to intervene will not be a decisive factor in influencing local opinion. We have got, therefore, to learn that a new task is imposed on our military forces which cannot be assessed by the old yardsticks. The behind-the-line organization necessary for international police operations is nothing at all like that required for a great national army. It is hardly more than that required for police operations at home. The essential prerequisite of such a mobile international police force as is required is a complete uniformity of equipment, training, and discipline, so that everything required by all arms is interchangeable. Once this prerequisite is supplied, the burden imposed by the proposal for twenty fully armed and mobilized divisions on the Rhine frontier becomes supportable. It will, indeed, be seen at once that, given the co-operation of Western Germany and Spain, as well as the existing signatories to the Atlantic pact, the contribution which would be required from each country is by no means heavy, having regard to the forces at present maintained (Western Germany, of course, excepted) in Western Europe. But we in Great Britain must give the lead, and for the excellent reason

that we have had this very problem to face for nearly one hundred years on another frontier. Under the twenty divisions plan, the British contribution could not possibly exceed (or, indeed, approach) the number of long-service, fully mobilized troops we have kept in India, Africa, and the Far East since the mutiny for duties of a predominantly police character. Our imperial problem was, in fact, a cold war problem and we solved it early by building our military system round the requirements of our Asiatic and African Empire and not *vice versa*. Our problem, which was once peculiar to us, is now the problem of the whole western world, to find a military system which enables the western world to keep a fine, fully trained, long-service police army on the Rhine and at the same time to be able to expand and reinforce this army in the event of a shooting war in Europe. It can be said with confidence that all serious students of war in this country and in the United States know both that this is the problem and that it can be solved. It is hardly to be supposed that the French and German military experts are less intelligent or far-sighted. It is now the first duty of the Western European politicians to get together and, facing the realities of the problem, to instruct their military advisers to get together and work out a solution. Once that has been done, the menace of the cold war is over.

As in the diplomatic so in the military sphere, the invasion of southern Korea affords a timely warning. Korea is within the easiest striking distance of an overwhelmingly superior United States fleet and air force. But neither arm could stop or even delay the advance of the mechanized ground forces of the invaders or prevent the crossing of the Han river. Substitute for the 38th parallel the Rhine frontier and for 150 somewhat ill-found tanks, manned by second-class troops, 1,500 tanks of the heaviest modern pattern, manned by highly trained troops, and the lesson is tragically clear. It must be heeded, and at once.

Will Russia, if she finds the progress of the cold war effectively arrested, herself turn to the shooting war? The answer here is guesswork, but it seems reasonable to say that she will not, if she is promised any effective resistance. Ultimately,

Russia must be the loser in the shooting war, just as surely as she must ultimately win the cold war unless the West recovers the moral energy to oppose her. The material superiority of the American productive machine is already fact, just as is the American superiority in economic resources. The recovery of moral energy in Western Europe is, on the contrary, not yet accomplished, and Russia will not allow it to proceed without interruption by propaganda, sabotage, and fifth-column operations. It is for this kind of warfare that Russia is pre-eminently prepared; she will not, however great her difficulties, be at all likely to abandon it, and choose of her own initiative a form of warfare in which, however tempting her immediate opportunities, her ultimate defeat can almost certainly be expected. In the sphere of politics, therefore, one new and important conclusion arises. Not only must the defence forces of the West be planned to meet the tactical requirements of cloak-and-dagger warfare, but some form of regional association for defence must be created which will make it politically possible within the framework of international law for the associated governments to lend each other support for the maintenance of internal order. It can never be sufficient under present conditions merely to guarantee the inviolability of frontiers.

It is not only necessary by mutual economic assistance and Marshall Aid to ensure that the freely elected governments of the West be able to offer their peoples the chance of economic recovery within a free system, but they must also be enabled to assist each other against the sabotage of their industry and the subversion of their free institutions by force. The Geneva doctrine of non-intervention was always an affront to the moral sense of the world; to-day it is a menace to the survival of civilization. If governments which are broadly based on the consent of the governed are allowed to be overthrown by an armed minority while the rest of the western world looks on, the cold war will not be arrested. There are within every free nation-state to-day enough Communists and fellow travellers to give to every attempt to destroy the regime from within the appearance of an ordinary political manoeuvre by one political party against another. We have to learn that this deceptive appearance is itself a weapon in the cold war. The politicians

of the West have to face to-day the admittedly difficult and confusing task of seeking the reality beneath the appearance. The faked election, the suborned government, the corrupted or censored press—all these are part of the technique by which Europe is being enslaved. It is an inescapable necessity of the time that the use of these techniques be checked, and they will not be checked by the periodical utterance of pious sentiments. If, whenever a traitor is shot or a murderer pays the penalty of his crimes, a howl of indignation is to go up from every 'progressive' organization, not excluding some important sections of the British Conservative party, the authority of government in a hard and ruthless age cannot be preserved. It will be quite useless to offer money and diplomatic support, or even arms, to the free nations, struggling for survival on what are to-day the frontiers of civilization, if we demand on every occasion, as the price of our assistance, a pardon for every traitor and a free railway pass to enable every murderer to rejoin his family for Christmas. Neither must we continue to assume, in face of the Christian revival in Europe, that every one approaching a Catholic church, except with the intention of burning it, is a dangerous and probably criminal reactionary. We have to learn once again to be hard, realistic, tolerant to all the friends of civilization—even to those we dislike—and ruthless to all its enemies, even to those we like.

We must also realize the significance of the change in the character of the governing classes in Western Europe. Europe in historical times has been governed in turn by an armed feudal aristocracy, a territorial nobility, and a propertied class, by military power, by privilege, and by property. To-day Europe is governed by professional politicians. The successive changes in the character of the governing classes have been the result of economic and social developments generally beneficent in their character; but of all the consequences of social and economic progress and political change the least beneficent, without a doubt, is the change in the status and quality of the men who rule on the continent of Europe. British administration is no longer in the hands of a propertied, let alone a privileged, class, but all classes collaborate, and the actual work of government is still largely in the hands of those with some hereditary

experience of its problems. Further, we have in Great Britain no disputed provinces, no alien populations, and no pretender to the throne. None of these conditions prevail on the Continent. Finally, there is in Great Britain no fundamental division of opinion on constitutional issues. The regime is not challenged. Can this be said of France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, or Greece? Is it likely to be the case within our lifetime in Germany? A disputed succession, the existence of republican, monarchical, or separatist parties, the bitter disputes between clericals and anti-clericals, all these things imply that half the professional politicians on the Continent are not whole-hearted in their loyalty to the regime they serve. This means that revolution, a *coup d'état*, the restoration or the fall of a monarchy, are continually recurring possibilities, and that those who work for them will never lack some volume of popular support. There are in every country of Europe large bodies of people who regard themselves as owing little or no loyalty to the existing regime, and who only hope by their votes to bring about a situation likely to lead to its collapse. Is it not obvious that in these conditions, and given the character of the new governing class, political stability is hardly to be expected even in normal conditions? In present circumstances, can the fate of the western world be put to the hazard every other year by some general election which may, by some chance combination of circumstances, leave the political balance in some key country in the hands of the Communists or their friends?

That is the determining argument for some pooling of sovereignty among the Western European states in matters of foreign policy and defence. In the long run it is thus, and thus only, that the internal affairs of the states can be left open to the unrestricted and democratic play of public opinion. Some pooling of sovereignty should be immediately possible. Certainly the political conditions for the security of Western Europe will not be satisfactorily and permanently provided until some pooling of sovereignty has taken place. And such a pooling of sovereignty for the specific purpose of defence must therefore be the first cardinal aim of British foreign policy. Until it possesses some responsible executive instrument of government, the embryo general staff of the Atlantic powers or of Western

Union is a brain without a body. Great Britain must not deceive herself, as she is trying to do to-day, into thinking that in some mysterious way she can stand aside from Western Union, or pick and choose those with whom she will graciously associate. A Western Union for defence, if it is to be militarily effective, must include Great Britain and must also include Turkey, Western Germany, and the Iberian peninsula. Our adherence is politically, economically, and militarily indispensable to the strategic purpose of Western Union. This purpose is to ensure not only against any extension of the cold war but also that, in the event of a shooting war, the western powers shall be in a position to pass at once to the offensive so that the new missile weapons fall not on the industrial zone of Western Europe and on Great Britain but on what is to-day Russian-occupied territory. For this purpose Great Britain is indispensable as an advanced base for the mass reinforcements which will come from North America. The British industrial potential is also necessary to the military economy of Western Union. Finally, our political role is to interpret Europe to the United States. We alone of the great powers talk, however falteringly, two languages: the languages of the old and of the new world. For this reason we shall always be much misunderstood by both, but we are for this reason necessary to both.

Further, unless we are active and enthusiastic participants in Western Union, we shall not get the co-operation of the western powers in the defence of south-east Asia, which is so much more important to us than to any other European power. As we have seen, the safety of our economy depends on calling a halt to the Communist advance in that quarter. If that advance continues, it will not only ruin us irretrievably but add immensely to the military power of Russia in Europe. Looking at the Asiatic problem realistically, the continued adherence of India and Pakistan to the Commonwealth will depend largely if not entirely on the military strength in south-east Asia of the Western European powers. If great aggregations of populations in south-east Asia stand by the Western European traditions and civilization, which they will only do if Western Europe and the United States stand by them, then the threat of a Communist China will be unlikely to materialize.

If it does not, a balance of forces in Asia as well as in Europe can in due course be reached. On the opposite reckoning, with Russia dominant in Asia, the catastrophe of an atomic war, a war fought, that is, with the despairing and ultimately futile purpose of destroying the adversary, would be almost inevitable.

When we contrast what should be the aims of our foreign policy with our resources, we begin to measure the extent of our decline from the status and strength necessary to a great power. We have lost our Asiatic base, our Asiatic striking force, and our Asiatic industrial potential without losing any of our Asiatic responsibilities or being in a position to give them up. Secondly, we are wholly governed by a public opinion which is not merely uninstructed but which has been, with deliberation and over a period of years, wrongly instructed in foreign affairs. Our people have been brought up to think that there is a ready-made solution for all imperial problems by conferring autonomy within the Commonwealth, or, if necessary, independence outside the Commonwealth, on any one who will take it. Our people have been taught to believe that this policy is not only wise and virtuous but that it relieves them of any cause for worry, as if we had governed and defended India in order to protect the 6,000 Englishmen engaged in the business of government or stayed in Burma in order to protect Government House at Rangoon. The attitude is as ridiculous as that of the Turkish diplomat whom the Baroness Kleinmichel met after the end of the First World War; 'the collapse of three empires had left him entirely unmoved, but when he heard that the Yacht Club in Petrograd was closed he burst into tears.' To conceive of government as an extra course in the banquet of life which you can leave out, and yet be certain to have the rest served up to you at leisure with the same refinements, is to carry self-deception to the point of fantasy. Yet that is the belief to which public opinion has been assiduously trained. In European affairs we have had a tragic awakening, but unfortunately we are tempted by this very fact to imagine that we can compensate for our new liabilities on the Rhine by sloughing off our old responsibilities in the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and south-east Asia. We cannot do anything of the kind.

Thirdly, we have temporarily incapacitated ourselves for self-defence, let alone for defending any one else, by leaving ourselves with no reserve of taxable wealth. No nation in that position can wage more than a very short and easy war. We are face to face with the risk of a long and desperate war. All wars are necessarily financed to a great extent by inflation, since money has to be poured out on a lavish scale to men engaged on economically non-productive labour, fighting, or making munitions and other goods for destructive purposes. This inflation can be kept within bounds only if the nation which finds itself at war can, almost at once, double its rate of taxation and so prevent purchasing power getting out of pace with the supply of consumer goods. Such a policy, however, is impracticable if taxation is already so high that any substantial addition would drain the banks of their private balances, bankrupt the owners of real estate, by making it impossible for people to pay rents or mortgage interest, and ruin the insurance offices by making it impossible for people to keep up their premiums. The banks, the building societies, the great ground landlords (now almost without exception the great financial institutions), and the insurance companies are the chief pillars of any war-time finance and, whatever government may say in peace-time, it must look to them for help the moment war is declared. If a country has, as we have to-day, no reserves of taxable wealth, taxation cannot, in fact, be increased and the only financial agent left is the printing press. That way lies ruin, and those whom we wish to count on as allies and those who regard us as their potential or actual enemies are alike aware of the fact. Mr. Bevin may make magnificent speeches, and Mr. Shinwell may send his magnificent jet-fighters and bombers to show the flag round the world, but the men who determine policy look behind the façade to the hard reality of our financial position. Are we financially able to fight another long war, or are we not?

Fourthly, we have to face the prospect of many years of European unrest without the immense strength that came to us in years past from a predominant navy and a powerful empire. It is no fault of ours that sea power without air power is now of little account. It is, however, our misfortune, because

air power without sea power is, for an island people with sea communications, equally useless. We have, therefore, in order to retain, as we must, the unchallenged command of the sea, to be supreme in two arms and in three dimensions. This imposes an immense strain on our manpower, and more particularly because it is far from certain that the offensive is not for the moment on top in the submarine war. The loss of our Indian Empire is, of course, an absolute loss. Granted that the new dominions of India and Pakistan support us unquestionably, they will be more likely to need assistance for their own defence than to take over from us the defence of our vital Asiatic interests. Our position in Africa is also far less happy than in the past. Our Palestine policy has antagonized the Arab world, and our relations with the dominion government in South Africa are by no means cordial. Only in the old dominions of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand can we look with confidence for gallant, generous, and efficient help in trouble. Mainly, and rightly, we must look to ourselves, and must, therefore, face our responsibilities.

We can only defend Western Europe with the effective military co-operation of all the nations of Western Europe, including Western Germany and the Iberian peninsula. Unless the defence of Western Europe by the Western Europeans is effectively organized with reasonable speed, the financial and industrial backing of the United States will not be continued and Western Union will not be achieved without British initiative. Before we can commit ourselves freely to that initiative we must reach an agreement with the United States, France, and Holland to secure and stabilize the position in south-east Asia.

Being at once a maritime, a European, and an Asiatic power we have, of all European powers, the heaviest burden to bear. We must, as a condition of our survival, be ready to adapt our domestic policy so that we can discharge that burden. We are not to-day doing so.

In conclusion, something must be said of Russia's position and ambitions as they must be inferred from her actions. In one sense it is true to say that the policy of Russia has not changed with the centuries; there is no reason why it should.

She wishes to secure and exploit as much of the mineral wealth of Poland and Silesia and as much of the cornland of the Ukraine and the Hungarian plain and of Rumania as she can. She wishes to secure control of the Dardanelles and so secure an exit to the Mediterranean. In Asia she wishes to extend her hold over China; in this way she wishes to loosen our hold on India.

Nevertheless, it is a very different Russia which is pursuing these ambitious aims. Is she still an imperial power, strong, united, and determined, or is she driven to expansionist policies either by hysterical fanaticism for the Communist cause or, as so often in history, by internal weakness? These questions cannot be answered certainly, because, like all uncivilized powers, Russia publishes no reliable statistics and a great number of statements which are plain lies. All great armies, however, not even excluding those of Germany, decline in efficiency after a great war and we know that as late as 1944 the Russian armies were notably less efficient than the German, while the German by that date were far behind the standard set by the United States and Great Britain. Secondly, Russia's industrial efficiency, although certainly increasing, is far below that of Western Europe, and much further below that of the United States, while the available statistics indicate that her agricultural production per hectare, even in the late thirties, was actually below that for 1913.¹ Thirdly, there have been

¹ Compare, for example, the following statistics of grain output for 1913 and for 1934-38:

Year	Area (Million Hectares)	Index Numbers	Gross Output (Million Centners)	Index Numbers	Average Yield per Hectare (in Centners)	Index Num- bers
1913	94.4	100	801.0	100	8.5	100
1934	104.7	110.9	804.6	100.4	7.6	89.4
1935	103.4	109.5	810.9	101.2	7.8	91.8
1936	102.4	105.5	744.6	92.9	7.3	85.9
1937	104.4	110.6	982.6	122.7	10.3	121.1
1938	102.4	108.5	854.9	106.7	8.4	98.8

For other illuminating statistics see W. T. McVittie's article 'Soviet Russia: Agricultural Statistics and Comments.'—*New English Review*, May 1948.

a number of 'purges' since 1945 which indicate weakness and fear, not strength and audacity. It is certain that the Soviet productive economy is immeasurably more powerful than that of Czarist Russia, but it is idiotic to imagine that it is as yet approaching that of Great Britain or the United States. Given the Russian manpower and resources, their annual income in goods and services should be nearly treble that of the United States. Quite obviously it is nothing of the kind. Russia is still, despite her immense natural advantages, not only relatively but absolutely poorer in every way than the United States. She is supreme only in her use of two weapons—fear and propaganda. By fear she works on her neighbours; by propaganda on her more distant adversaries. We can and must disarm her of the first of these weapons by creating a powerful international police army ready for instant action in defence of freedom, wherever, in Europe's no man's land, its standard is raised. But we have to be equally alive to Russian propaganda, a lot of which we are swallowing, hook, line, and sinker, to-day. Has Russia really got 26,000 military aeroplanes with trained crews? Has she really got 500 long-range submarines with their crews? And what of the innumerable armoured divisions of which we hear? We should cast our minds back to 1938 and 1939. We know now that the 20,000 bombers ready to be launched at Great Britain on the outbreak of war were not in reality 200, nor even 20. Even when, after our defeat, we had to face without allies the whole air strength of Germany, it proved to be a task within our capacity. As for 1939, we know now that there were, in fact, between the whole armed might of France and Great Britain and Berlin in September 1939 only eight regular divisions and thirty-two reserve divisions, no company or battery of which had ever fired live ammunition and none of which were ready in any respect to go into action.¹ We were the victims of the biggest bluff in history. Let us at least learn the lesson which we ought to have learnt from the Spanish Civil War, when propaganda nearly won a war which no one, in fact, ever began to fight and which never, from the very

¹ See 'Was the German Army Prepared for War in 1939?' by General Siegfried Westphal, *English Review Magazine*, November 1949.

beginning, had any possible chance of military success. It is often wise to overestimate your enemy, but it is a tragedy to lose a war through so doing, as we did in 1939. We must greatly beware of doing the same thing again.

Finally, we must remember Russia's Achilles heel. The establishment of Communism throughout Europe is essential to her economy if it is to be expanded rapidly and she is therefore condemned to be consistently aggressive and thus to deny herself the greatest of all military weapons, surprise. The free nations of the west can live and expand and grow strong in the world as it is. So, ultimately, can Russia. That is the one hopeful fact in the world of to-day. But Russia wishes to expand very rapidly, and that is the least hopeful fact in the world to-day.

From the earliest times there have always been debtor and creditor countries, and the world's accounts were ultimately balanced by the actual transfer of gold or treasure from the one to the other. This method was never satisfactory. Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries died of a surfeit of gold from the Indies, as, fifteen centuries earlier, the vigour and character of Rome had been sapped by the influx of treasure from Dacia and the East. The solution to a problem which had puzzled humanity from the earliest dawn of civilization was found in the nineteenth century to be capital investment in the debtor by the creditor countries, and this remains the only effective long-term solution of a problem which is of its nature a permanent one, although the roles of the different countries will change from generation to generation with the shifting balance of power, the discovery of new sources of wealth, and the development of new industries or territories. An important factor underlying the interest of the United States in the free-economy countries of Europe and in their overseas possessions is their need for fields for capital investment to balance their huge export surplus. It is, however, a necessary condition of such investment that the countries in which it is made shall be politically stable and militarily secure. Hence Marshall Aid, and hence the Atlantic defence pact. Hence also the growing interest in the United States in the more ambitious scheme for Atlantic Union.

Precisely the same motives are behind the pressure of Russia to push the iron curtain further west and further south. Russia's export potential is vast, although still far from being realized. Russia, therefore, will need, as the United States needs already, fields for capital investment abroad. Just, however, as a free-enterprise economy can only invest in other free economies, so a Communist economy can only invest in other Communist countries. Since Communism nowhere exists by the will of the people but only by force, this means in effect that Russia can only hope to find fields for investment in countries under her own political control. It is thus useless at present either to expect Russian pressure westwards to be relaxed or to expect any willing relaxation of political control over the countries behind the iron curtain. On the other hand, this analysis reveals very clear reasons why Russia is unlikely, in so far as she is guided by self-interest, to pass from the cold war to the shooting war, always provided, but only provided, that the west is so armed and prepared that the shooting war would be a stern and destructive struggle and not another march to Dunkirk.

It is sometimes said that Russia must, in the long run, become the predominant world power because of her illimitable undeveloped resources in men, materials, and territory. This is not so. In Canada, Australia, Africa, and New Zealand, to say nothing of south-east Asia, the free-economy countries have vastly greater potential resources and fields for capital investment which are immediately available, subject only to the security of Western Europe. If we can rise to the height of our grave and urgent responsibilities in the matter of promoting Western Union and the military defence of Western Europe and the Mediterranean basin and south-east Asia, our future as a great power will remain. If we fail to rise quickly and vigorously to our responsibilities, we shall continue to decline and need not hope to recover.

We are not to-day rising to the level of these high responsibilities, and our voice lacks the accent of authority, without which all power is vain and all pride but dust. We are not ready to bestride the world's stage resolutely and to defend everywhere our English conception of justice and ordered peace,

Unless we do so, these conceptions will play no part in that commerce of ideas and ideals out of which the new world will be born. Men only believe in absolute values. Such belief, and such alone, energizes races and institutions, and only energy so generated is irresistible. Men who are preaching the doctrine of compromise and peace at any price are admitting that they themselves have no dynamic ideas to give them energy to resist the destructive ideas of others. The domination of Western European civilization on the Continent by those whom Burke well called vulgar and mechanical politicians, is we may hope, over. Let us, however, be sure that we can continue that notable quotation with a clear conscience, and say that such have also no more place among ourselves. A nation that comes to believe that right and wrong can be determined by the counting of heads has come to believe that right and wrong are meaningless terms. When a nation believes that, the gates of hell have prevailed against it. Such a nation can possess no justification for the assumption of any mission, for the enforcement of any rule. It must wither and quickly die before the instinctive and dominant force of nations still potent. 'There is no escape from the law which has made resolution, courage, audacity, an inspiration to sacrifice, and an exaltation in serving the condition of the enduring greatness of peoples.' We, of all nations, should derive from our history and our heredity a full measure of these qualities. It is my hope that we may yet prove to have done so, and that the sombre and dishonouring record of the last thirty years of futile diplomacy and inconclusive war may be only an interlude in the history of a great nation.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1950: *ENGLAND UNDER SOCIALISM*

MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL'S reference to the Gestapo in his first broadcast before the 1945 election is said to have cost him the election. All that he had done, however, was to adorn with Churchillian rhetoric the important comment that the policy of Mr. Attlee and his colleagues was not democratic but totalitarian. Any British Government, whether Conservative, Liberal, or Socialist, is under our existing constitution omnipotent. We have no written constitution. The second chamber has no right of permanent veto, and the sovereign has no right of veto at all. An independent judiciary was once regarded as a safeguard of liberty but that safeguard is now negated by the new practice of retrospective legislation. The individual now has no secure rights against the State and can even, as was seen at Nuremberg, be executed for doing something which was not a crime when he did it. There is, therefore, nothing that an elected majority, however bare, cannot in theory do, and no constitutional reform is necessary to render a British Government totalitarian; it need only desire to be so. The essence, as the world understands it, of totalitarianism is the two-fold claim that the individual has no antecedent rights against the State and that the State has no obligation to deal uniformly with all individuals. The second claim is much the more deadly in practice. Mr. Attlee's government makes both claims without reserve.

As long as the State accepted in practice the obligation to treat all classes, all creeds, and all races alike, public opinion provided substantial security against injustice. If it was necessary, before any man could be punished for his opinion, to legislate so that all men could be punished for their opinions; if, before any man could be arbitrarily deprived of his property,

it was necessary to legislate so that no man had any right to his property, then most men were, in fact, secure in these freedoms. It is true that, all through history, the State has claimed to possess reserved powers to deal exceptionally with exceptional cases. The extreme assertion of these powers was the Bill of Attainder by which, without process of law or proving that the subject had broken any law, an individual could, by a special Act of Parliament, be deprived of life, liberty, property or civil rights or, often enough, of all simultaneously. A more usual exercise of the State's reserved powers was the denial of civil rights, either in whole or in part, to heretics, prior to the Reformation, and, after the Reformation, to Roman Catholics, and on occasion to different sects or, even, in the case of the non-jurors, to ministers of the Established Church. Subject to this important exception, the course of our history ran steadily, after the Tudor revolution had run its course, against the great assumption of powers made by the State in the sixteenth century.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, political liberty was absolute, in the sense that all men were free to think and to speak as they liked and to do what they liked with their own; the function of the State was reduced to seeing that no man infringed another's rights to do as he chose with his life and property. This worked against social justice because in practice the propertyless were powerless against the men of property; the propertyless had won the right to speak and to organize, but they lacked the right to vote, which they did not obtain in full measure until 1925. Nevertheless, the social conscience was fully awakened and the nineteenth century was (as we have seen) the great age of social reform and saw the slow, tentative, partial return to the medieval theory of the right of all, together with political liberty, to a secure economic and social status. But a new and wholly different note was struck in the present century, when Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman's government introduced a differential rate of taxation for unearned as opposed to earned income. Here was the assertion by the State that one class in the community, as less morally deserving, was to be differentially treated. A few years later the State made another revolutionary departure in beginning, through the machinery of Mr. Lloyd George's Insurance Act, the transfer of

cash from one class in the community to the private use and enjoyment of the individual members of another class. With the extension of the franchise after the First World War, it became, at once, a question where these two new procedures would end. They ended as we know in the establishment, by 1939, of that entirely new politico-economic system first known as state capitalism and now more generally called the welfare state. The structure of the welfare state was completed by the Beveridge insurance proposals, which became law in 1945 and 1946, by the National Health Service Act of 1947, and by the Butler Education Act, passed in 1944.

The essence of the welfare state, as conceived by its capitalist inventors, was that the State preserved the free enterprise system on conditions. The principal condition was that the government guaranteed that the system should provide a dividend to the community over and above what it had always paid in wages, rent, interest, and profits. This dividend had, by 1935, taken the form of a guarantee of work or maintenance and a great social security system partly non-contributory and at all points heavily subsidized. The plans of Mr. Churchill's national government, implemented in part by that government, in part by Mr. Churchill's 'caretaker' government, and in part by Mr. Attlee's government, provided for the extension of the social security scheme to all classes on a contributory but still heavily subsidized scale, for the addition to that scheme of a system of family allowances and other increased benefits, for a free national health service, and for an extension of the long established free education service to include secondary education for all up to the age of fifteen and more generous provision for free higher and university education.

The welfare state necessitated from the first a completely new approach to the problem of taxation. Taxation used to provide communally for those services (such as defence, public health, police, justice, street lighting, drainage, sanitation, and so forth) which by their nature could not be provided by the individual citizens for themselves. By 1939 taxation had become, first and foremost, the machinery which takes away from the normal recipients, the wage and salary earners, the holders of mortgages or debentures, the owners of real estate,

and the owners of risk-capital, a high proportion of the purchasing power arising out of the net product of enterprise, and gives it to the State to be expended as the State thinks right in the public interest. This transfer involved a vast redistribution of income justified not by the proved capacity of the recipients to produce but by their imputed need to consume. The distinction between proof and imputation was fundamental to the system and amounted to the partial acceptance by the capitalist free enterprise system of the Socialist ethic, 'from each according to his capacity, to each in accordance with his need.'

Partly as the result of muddle-headedness, partly as the result of a deliberately mendacious propaganda, the welfare state, of which the true originator was, in so far as any one man is entitled to the credit, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, is both confused with Socialism and widely regarded as having been introduced by the present Socialist Government. It is as revolutionary a conception as Socialism, but it is fundamentally different from it, and all that Mr. Attlee and his colleagues have contributed to it is to implement the decisions of Mr. Churchill's war-time coalition government, which in itself merely proposed to carry to their logical conclusion the social security system whose broad lines had been laid down once and for all by Conservative statesmen long before 1939.

The welfare state has, with many merits, many grave defects, alike as a system of government and a way of life for a society—defects which have been thrown into high relief by a great deal of maladministration during the last five years, but Mr. Attlee and his colleagues are in process of substituting Socialism for that state capitalist system which gave birth to the welfare state. To understand the social and economic condition of England to-day we must first of all be clear as to the difference between the welfare state as planned and the welfare state under Socialism. We shall then be able to see how far the disorders and difficulties of our time are due to Socialism or the threat of it and how far they are due to the inherent weakness of the welfare state for the creation of which the Conservatives and, to a far less extent, the Liberal party are primarily responsible.

The key defect of the welfare state is that there is no principle working between the individual and the community which will automatically limit the claims of the one on the other to what is fair, reasonable, or even possible. There is no *reason* in the welfare state world why education should stop at fifteen instead of eighteen; why aspirins for neurasthenics should be paid for and not holidays by the seaside for children. On the other side of the picture, there is no *reason* why discriminatory taxation should begin with incomes of £2,000 per annum and not at £1,500 per annum or at £3,000 per annum. All these things are arbitrary decisions of government, continuously varying not so much under direct political pressure, as cynics might expect, as according to the whims or prejudices of our different rulers. On the other hand, if we regard the system as a whole, i.e. the totality of the benefits in cash and kind to be provided by the welfare state, there was, under the free economy, a clear self-regulating principle at work. The essential safeguard of the welfare state is private enterprise. The upward limit to what the state can spend is provided by what private enterprise can pay while remaining an efficient productive system.

Every penny which, in popular language, 'the State' spends is provided not out of the 'aggregate of private income,' so-called, but out of the (much smaller) 'net product of enterprises'¹ which, until the Socialists came into power, were wholly

¹ The 'aggregate of private income' is the total of all incomes, including those provided by simple transfers of income, e.g. social security payments, war pensions, not related to earnings. The 'income received from factors of production' is smaller, being the total of the national income from rent, interest, profits, professional earnings, salaries, wages, but excluding transfer payments. The 'net product of enterprises' is much smaller again; the difference between this figure and that for income from factors of production being that portion of the government's expenditure which is collected from the recipients of the net product of enterprise and used to provide an income for those engaged in activities not classed as enterprise—notably the armed forces and the civil service, the servants of public and local authorities and the holders of government securities (excluding, of course, the new nationalization issues, the interest on which is or should be the product of the nationalized enterprises).

The respective totals of these three 'incomes' (as defined above) for 1946 was £9,455,000,000, £8,100,000,000, and £6,250,000,000. These figures reflect at one and the same time the directly inflationary character of

private enterprises. The first charge on private enterprise is for wages and salaries: if the rate of taxation on a particular enterprise (or on its products or on its customers) is so high that at any given moment it is impossible to pay the existing rates of salaries and wages without failing to meet the interest on its prior charges (loans, mortgages, or debentures), or to make proper provision for repairs, renewals, and modernization of plant and machinery, the enterprise must either cease to produce or it must pay lower salaries and wages. In practice this state of affairs will come about for all industrial enterprises at about the same time, and the productive machine will make the required adjustment either by paying lower real salaries and wages (i.e. increasing prices and retaining the old rate of wages) or by cutting wage rates (i.e. keeping prices stable and reducing the nominal rate of wages). The virtue of the private enterprise system (considered from this point of view) is that *it cannot carry losses indefinitely*. In the overwhelming majority of businesses the adjustment must be made *before the loss occurs*, because there is no fund available to the ordinary private business from which recurrent losses can be met. The free reserves of businesses are sufficient to meet seasonal losses, or non-recurrent losses, of a moderate character, but no business, however prosperous, can afford to run at a loss for more than a year or two and for most businesses it is a matter of months. The private enterprise system provides, therefore, a very real assurance that the economy of the welfare state will not get permanently out of balance, that, in short, we shall not wake up one day and find ourselves bankrupt as a nation, and, therefore, as individuals, with our savings and our livelihood gone at one and the same time and all the State's 'promises to pay' in the form of insurance benefits, pensions, and the like, repudiated at one fell swoop, or met (as would actually happen) in a currency depreciated to the point of being worthless.

What British Socialism is doing, slowly but apparently quite

government expenditure, and the immense drain imposed on the private enterprise system by the present level of such expenditure both in the diversion of manpower from production and in the diversion of spending power which could (and to a substantial extent should) be applied to capital purposes.

deliberately, is to take out of the welfare state the one regulating principle which the private enterprise system provided. It is true that, although a strong minority of the Socialist party wish as quickly as possible to extend Socialism until the whole field of private productive enterprise is brought under state ownership and control, there is certainly a minority (and just possibly a bare majority) who wish to halt the process of Socialism at the point which it has already reached. This section of the party hope to keep the true Socialists quiet by making from time to time further strictly limited incursions into Socialism, not primarily to weaken the structure of private enterprise but rather to bolster up the extremely insecure structure of the socialized public utilities by creating one or two profitable state monopolies in the productive sphere. All Socialists, however, are equally determined to destroy the self-regulating principle provided by private enterprise, because they are all determined to meet such increases in the price of necessities as may be forced on private enterprise by the needs of the welfare state either by subsidies to the consumer or by increased wages. It is their fixed determination that whoever shall pay for the ever-increasing costs of the welfare state it shall not be the working-class consumer. It is that determination, rather than the scatter-brained dream of balancing the losses on nationalized transport and state-controlled agriculture by profits from a state steel or sugar-refining monopoly, which immediately threatens Britain with the worst economic crisis in her history.

It is easy to see that a fall in world prices would create a crisis, in which either wages would have to fall or we should lose our export trade, but that crisis would be one of mal-adjustment only, since the fall in world prices would *ex hypothesi*, enable nominal wages to be reduced without a fall in real wages. That crisis, therefore, would be essentially political and therefore relatively minor. The major crisis which faces us will arise from the fact that the only regulating principle in the welfare state was that the demands of the beneficiaries had to be met out of the product of the private enterprise system which would be forced, if the demands were excessive, either to raise prices or reduce costs and so keep the national economy in balance. To-day we are faced with the fact that a numerical

majority of the electorate are promised by the State that whatever the economic consequence of their demands on the welfare state they shall not be called upon to pay them. We are thus in a position where the inherent weakness of the welfare state itself must, in the judgment of most people, lead the country to disaster. There is no logical limit to the demands that can be made upon the welfare state other than the burden which the grant of the demands must place on those who make them, but that limit only operates so long as the free economy is allowed to work freely. The Socialists insist that it shall not be allowed to do so.

Analysing the problem of the welfare state fifteen years ago,¹ I wrote as follows: 'The real difficulty of forming any even rough estimate of the present security of our position, our social and cultural ideals, our moral standards, and so on, lies in this certainty, that the system is not static. Of all its defects that, in the view of many sympathetic observers, is the most serious. How serious it is we see at once if we ask ourselves, not as politicians, but as simple and decent Christian citizens, a few random questions. Why should education for the children of the poor stop at fourteen rather than at fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen? Why should a man and his wife, out of work through no fault of their own, receive, for instance, 26s. a week rather than 36s. or 46s. or 56s.? Why should the working man get free medical treatment but not free dental treatment? Why should not the old age pension be 20s. or 30s. a week? Why should the agricultural labourer be uninsured and the town labourer insured against unemployment?

'It is of the essence of state capitalism, and this fact distinguishes it from any other system past, present, or projected, that it contains neither within its political armoury nor its philosophy any answer at all, either good, bad, or indifferent, to any of these questions. Under conditions of anarchy the strong arm provides an intelligible if immoral title to wealth, women, and food. Under feudalism rights corresponded to obligations and the obligations discharged were in actual practice vital to the community; they included the protection of the Crown lands from marauders and the protection of the

¹ I refer to the welfare state in this passage as 'state capitalism.'

holdings of all freemen and villeins alike from the exactions of Church and State. Even privilege had its basis in distinctions humanly intelligible. A lord, drunk or sober, was a lord, and entitled, in the opinion of the majority, to be treated as such. To pass along the centuries to the epoch only just concluded, the individualist system had a perfectly logical defence to the most grotesque anomalies of fortune, and, what was far more important, a perfectly logical answer to all political agitation. The theory was a perfect equality of opportunity, and if the theory was not working the practical answer was to make it work. And, in so far as it did work, the system justified itself. In the long run it failed to work, but only because of the resolute refusal of the governing class to turn the theory of equal opportunity into practice. . . . Communism, like individualism, provides an answer which may be unsatisfactory (though in a different way), but is at least intelligible. . . . The state capitalist society is unique in providing no answer at all.'

It will be noted that in every instance given in this passage, written in 1934, of possible new demands to which, under the welfare state, there would be no logical answer, the demands foreshadowed have long since been made and granted. A mass of altogether new demands has also, since then, been made and granted, and further demands are on the way. Already the vast army of state pensioners is gravely dissatisfied and, as I write, substantial increases are proposed for the 1,200,000 persons in receipt of National Assistance, mainly in supplementation of welfare state benefits. How long will the people be content to get as public assistance what they have been taught to claim as a right? Most of the claims made on the welfare state are inherently reasonable; the situation is critical not because they are unreasonable but because they are claimed as a right, irrespective of effort, and because the machinery of economic adjustment which would relate at least the totality of such claims to the economic effort of the workers as a whole has been deliberately put out of action by the present Socialist Government.

We are often asked how, if the economic effort is not at least roughly proportionate to the rewards provided, the present welfare state, allied to the present Socialist policy, has not

already led us to bankruptcy. The answer, of course, is provided by Lease-Lend, the Line of Credit, and Marshall Aid. We are not, and have not since 1941, been paying our way. We are paying in full to-day neither for our food nor for our raw materials, nor for our own defence. It is equally important to realize the extent to which we are living on capital. The yield of estate duty, which has risen from £27,000,000 in 1914 to £189,000,000 in 1949, may seem unimportant, in relation to the huge total of the tax revenue, which for the last financial year (1949-50) aggregated £3,686,000,000 or more than 36 per cent of the net product of enterprises. This amount of taxation is, however, in itself equivalent to a tax on capital. It removes out of business a great proportion of its potential reserves every year; it also removes from the pocket of the normal undertakers of new enterprise what they would have saved for investment and transfers it to the State, which spends it mainly in cash distributions to the non-saving classes. The incidence of taxation in itself operates to discourage saving. It is the potential investor of risk-capital who is most highly taxed; the man who habitually spends the whole of his income is the most lightly taxed. The humanitarian gleefully notes that the poor are favoured at the expense of the rich; the politician that the burden is placed most lightly on those who have the most votes; but the economist is bound to note that the present arrangements, however humane and whatever their electoral advantage, do not encourage saving and are progressively weakening the economic structure on which the welfare state depends.

There is a further factor of insecurity in other effects, so far only very partially operative, of the high taxation of personal incomes. The professional, who include the political, classes are mainly recruited from those who have been able in the past to pay for an expensive education for their children and to pay the cost of their professional training. The leaders of the professions, of commerce and industry and in the public service, were not only educated at their parents' expense, but came from homes where the lack of immediate financial pressure spelt leisure for a usually high standard of culture. The next generation alike of the professions and in the public service

will be a generation which has been struggling all its life and which will be quite unable to find hidden resources either to maintain its traditional background or to give its children the same opportunities as it enjoyed itself. The Socialists accept and welcome this. The next generation of the professions, in fact of the leaders in all walks of life, will be scholarship boys picked out on their merits from the national education system and helped by state aid at every point to qualify themselves for a professional career. It is necessary to ask, and wise to consider carefully before we give the answer, whether the selection will be made on sound principles and whether the education will be as good as in the past.

We pay far too little attention to the declared objective of the Socialists to lower, not to raise, the top standards of higher secondary and university education. Clever boys and girls in the provided schools must not take the school certificate until the age when all can take it, and as many as possible of the old fee-paying grammar schools are to be turned into free schools to which pupils will be allocated from the district in which they are situated, not selected from a relatively wide area by the school governors. All this stems from a revolutionary conviction that the right to choose the kind of education which children are to be given is a matter not for the parents but for the State, and that the parents, so far from having the right to claim from the State for their children the opportunities which they themselves enjoyed, have not even the right to give their children these opportunities at their own expense. The parents are indeed to be consulted, but theirs is not to be the determining voice. So far this revolutionary invasion of natural rights, of the *jus naturae* as known to the civilized world for much more than two thousand years, is not universally applied. The rich can afford to send their children to the great public schools, and there are still a number of the grammar schools which have preserved the right to retain places for fee-paying students. The Socialist objective is, however, clearly defined. No parent, merely because he can afford to pay for the higher education of his children, shall be allowed to do so. It is claimed to be no more than the logical application of the doctrine of fair shares : the children of the richer parents should not be allowed

to get any advantage over the children of parents less fortunate. What the Socialists overlook is that the inequalities between parents are, by and large, inequalities due to differences of natural aptitude and not to blind chance. And no society can afford in a competitive world to neglect the special cultivation and training of the children of its most highly endowed citizens. The assumption that the difference in the status of the parents is accidental runs contrary to common sense, experience, and the teachings of science. Like most assumptions begotten within the working-class movement of the last century, it relates to an imaginary world inhabited by privileged lords and ladies living in idleness on inherited wealth, and working men and women living out their lives in poverty and toil to maintain the few in idleness. That picture was never wholly, or even nearly, true, but it is to-day plain lunacy. The pattern of our modern democracy is, and has by now been for generations, utterly different, and it is this democratic pattern, not the structure of a long-vanished privileged caste society, which the Socialist education policy wishes to, and will effectively, destroy.

This democratic pattern has produced a great levelling up of all social classes. When the Public Schools Act was passed in the middle of the last century it related to a mere handful of schools. To-day there are over seventy schools represented at the annual headmasters' conference. Further, lavish grants have been made available to the great number of smaller foundations which cater for the families of all classes who wish to give their children higher secondary education but cannot afford the cost of a boarding school. Children of such parents, ever since 1918 at least, have been able to get an education at least as good, and in many cases far better (as the records of such a foundation as Manchester Grammar School prove), than that provided at the expensive public schools. Finally, the county education authorities have built and provided a great number of fine, new secondary schools to meet the needs of those new residential areas where there was no old foundation on which to build.

The purpose of these reforms was to bring together in suitable surroundings all those children of all classes, and regardless of their parents' means, who desired or needed higher secondary

education, so that these children could proceed at a greater pace and so to a higher level than if there were only one educational system which must necessarily proceed at the pace of the slowest. The system enabled a high degree of that specialization, which is the essential discipline of true higher education, both among pupils and teachers, and made the most highly qualified teachers available to the most promising pupils. The attack on this system, as far as concerns the right of entry into the general run of secondary schools, is based on the assumption that the parents chiefly concerned—mainly the owners of small businesses, minor business executives, and the younger professional men—are in the positions they occupy by luck and that their children are not entitled to any advantage because of the ability and willingness of their parents to pay very nominal fees and their willingness to make the substantial sacrifice involved in keeping their children at school till seventeen or eighteen. The Socialists forget that it is, in fact, the judgment of society as to their parents' worth to society which has given the children the opportunity which it is now sought to deny them, and claim the right, as each child reaches the age of eleven, themselves to decide which shall have the same opportunities as its parents and which shall be denied those opportunities. This monstrous claim is defended, partly on the ground that the teacher, aided by the now inevitable psychiatrist, knows better than the parents or the community, partly on the ground that now that the State pays the piper it can call the tune. Mainly, however, it is inspired by the probably more or less unconscious determination to ensure that we do not substitute for the always vulnerable and therefore never very dangerous aristocracy of privilege an aristocracy of talent whose specialized aptitudes are developed and trained from the earliest age and who are thus inevitably bound to fill the places for which nature intended them as leaders of the community in its different activities.

No doubt a great many of those who at present get higher secondary education will continue to get it, either because the facts of the individual case are too strong to be denied or because the parents will be willing to make the vastly greater sacrifice entailed in sending their children to the surviving

'free' schools. It is, however, no answer to parents who claim their natural rights to tell them that some local official will in all probability be so kind as to agree, as a matter of grace and favour, to their exercise of these rights. It is still less of an answer to say that if the parents insist on overriding the fiat of the officials, they are at liberty to get their rights by paying for them four times what they can afford. The threat to our national efficiency is perhaps an even stronger argument against what is proposed, because we know, from policies already declared, that the closed educational system is intended to level down, not to level up, to keep back the clever pupils, and to prevent what is called premature specialization but what is, in fact, simply the essential technique of all serious higher education.

What we are seeing here is, really, the age-old effort of every ruling class, when it succeeds to power, to ensure its monopoly of power by preventing others from rising into the ranks of the governing class except with the permission of the governing class. By taxing private earnings to the point where private savings are impossible, by confiscating hereditary wealth and asserting the sole right of the State to conduct productive enterprise, the new bureaucracy only needs to control and determine the number and identity of those trained to enter its own ranks to enjoy a totality of power such as has never been enjoyed by any ruling class in history outside Soviet Russia. If straws show the kind of wind which is blowing, the recent dismissal of a school teacher by a local education authority for coaching a boy in his spare time—not because it was against the rules but because it gave the boy an unfair advantage over his idler and less ambitious fellows—indicates that it is an all-destroying hurricane which is approaching what was once the citadel of the world's freedom and was only ten years ago the most notable outpost of its defence.

This is no party issue. There are many in all parties who look forward to the time when virtually the whole of the population will be dependent on the State for the whole of the amenities of life. Those who do so are the representatives of the most powerful class of the present day who, like the ruling classes which have preceded them, work in unspoken alliance

towards common ends. This class is the new aristocracy of the pen and the desk, the professional organizers and administrators, who not only control the executive government (itself a province of vastly increasing importance), but also the machinery of organized labour and organized capital, and who now wish to assume not only the direction of all our great productive undertakings but, through the control of education and doctoring, of the private lives of all the citizens.

'How great is the "silent revolution" already effected may be seen,' *The Times* pointed out in a leading article more than fifteen years ago, 'by reflecting that the capitalist, in the old sense, has virtually disappeared already. The men who by their personal wealth were able to give direct employment to tens or hundreds or thousands of workmen no longer dominate the industrial scene. For decades there has been an increasing concentration of capital and output, and the movement is gathering momentum. In consequence the capitalist, in the old sense, has lost his importance, and the men who matter in the economy of to-day are not those who own, but those who control, capital.'

The advent of this new ruling class is the most significant social development of the present century. Many have attacked the official bureaucracy, notably the late Lord Hewart, but that attack misfired because, from the standpoint of the plain man, the lawyer is himself one of the new ruling class, and the quarrel between the lawyers and the civil servants was merely a case of thieves falling out. One can be fully aware of the constitutional issues involved and yet sympathize with this view. The new ruling class does not rule by virtue of its office—only in the days of inherited privilege was such rule possible—but by virtue of its character, which brings to the solution of modern problems qualities which the nature of modern social and economic organization has made exceedingly valuable. In this way, but to this extent only, the new ruling class is the legitimate descendant of the feudal barons, the capitalistic sheep farmers, the merchants and merchant adventurers, and the great manufacturers and *entrepreneurs*, who in turn have found themselves in a position, by virtue of the relation of their qualities to the needs of their age, to shape its development and

to influence its political evolution. Yet in one respect the new ruling class is unique. Their predecessors, interested though they may have been, were interested in something other than themselves. They owed their pre-eminence to their constructive ability. They were builders, even if the structure they built was faulty. The bureaucrats only direct the work of others. They have not created what they control. They are builders only of their own reputations and architects only of their own fortunes. Their rise to power is typified by the fact that you can to-day go to the headquarters of any great undertaking—a bank, a railway, an engineering or textile combine, a shipping company, an oil company, or a general store—and be almost certain that its supreme direction will be in the hands of men who are essentially officials and organizers, and who seldom have experience of actually operating the business they are directing. The so-called ‘great industrialists’ of our generation may be great, but they are seldom if ever industrialists. They are men of paper, brain pickers, men who have the essential aptitude for controlling other people’s undertakings, for supervising intelligently the work of experts, and for co-ordinating the activities of half a hundred executives, without making it clear to any except their immediate *entourage* that they know nothing whatever about the matter in hand except what they pick up from their subordinates.

The intrusion of such men into place and privilege is now spreading rapidly to other fields. We have begun to appoint headmasters of great schools who have never been schoolmasters; they have, we are told, organizing ability. We have great newspapers in the hands of men who have never written a line and books reviewed by men who have never read. ‘I don’t read, I write,’ was the reply of one of our most popular columnists when asked whether he had read the work of a famous novelist. It was in the spirit of the age.

The political importance of these changes lies in this. If an industrialist writes to the press pleading for government control of industry the public are impressed. They do not take the trouble to look up the writer in *Who’s Who*. If they did, they would find that in plain fact he was a professor or a civil servant or a lawyer, and that what he was pleading for was a further

transfer of power from the old ruling class to the new one, to which he belongs. The rot goes deep. Nine out of ten of the 'economists' who advocate sweeping changes in the organization or management of industry are not economists at all, but lawyers and civil servants who have dabbled in economics as a hobby. Our great educationalists are not practical teachers, but the heads of education departments or members of educational boards or committees. When we come to government schemes of control, we can trace them easily and always to the so-called technical advisers of the government departments concerned; and these are without exception men of the new class—not farmers, but professors or teachers of agriculture; not mine managers but professors of mining; not general practitioners or research workers, but civil servants with a merely technical professional qualification.

The explanation of these facts, for each of the caps described fits some well-known and deservedly respected head, is of course simple and honourable. It is as absurd to attack the zest for power of the new bureaucracy as to attack the ambition for public service of the landlords or the tradesmen who at different times have climbed to power and dictated the form of our institutions. Power comes always from above. We must, however, recognize its nature and origins if we are to be saved from it.

Even though we have as yet not lost the right to produce but only to enjoy the fruits of our labours, the new ruling class is already everywhere. The result has been nothing less than revolutionary: for the first time in our social and political history the power has passed from the men who produce the goods to the men who sell them; from the men who make the news to the men who write it; from the men who do the work to the men who organize the men who do the work; from the employers of labour to the officials of the employers' federations; from the workers in the field and the factory to the officials of numerous craft unions. The natural order of importance quickly gets precisely reversed. In a world where no one can grow a cabbage without a permit the man who can issue the permit comes first, the man with the type of ability to get a permit comes next (although he may not necessarily,

nor even probably, be the best market gardener), and the ordinary consumer of cabbages comes nowhere at all: he is not even a necessary evil, since if he refuses to buy the cabbages the surplus will be given away at his expense.

It is, of course, the assumed need to control the large-scale semi-monopolistic industrial enterprises, now so fashionable, and the assumed need, in the interests of cheap subsidized food, to control the whole of our agriculture, which is playing into the political hands of the Socialist party. Even Mr. Gladstone accepted it as axiomatic that, if you had a monopoly, it must be state-controlled and that, if a corporation or firm received public money, the public had a right to supervise the management. By continuing food subsidies, with the consent of all parties, and by the continued expropriation of private wealth with a view to concealing, although it is spoken of as 'controlling,' the inflation which comes from allowing the great bulk of the population to consume more than the value of what they produce, the Socialists have perpetuated an ingenious system invented for the purpose of war-time finance and given half the people a vested interest in controlling the other half. The vast army of controllers at present tips the balance, and productive industry itself has many, especially at the top, who see in full-fledged Socialism a high road to security without financial responsibility, to the rewards of capitalism without the risks of competition.

The system will fail not because Socialism, *per se*, is unworkable, although it probably is, but because it certainly cannot be combined with the welfare state. There is no balancing factor. If the electorate so determines, we shall have Socialism in our time, but in that event the welfare state will go, either in a vast inflation which will reduce its benefits to chicken food, or in a deflation which will place and retain millions of people out of work. In that event the political consequence would be revolutionary, of necessity, since there is no road back from Socialism to the free-enterprise system. The whole technique of the Socialist revolution is based on the knowledge that Socialist measures are of their nature irreversible except by revolution. The Socialist state can be destroyed but it cannot be reformed. In any case, the political power of Parliament, and therefore

our political freedom, will be automatically destroyed when Socialism is fully established, because that freedom rests on the power of the House of Commons to withhold 'supply,' i.e. taxes, from the executive government. If the executive government already own all the machinery of production and the sources of wealth, Parliament has no power over it. It is, in other words, inherent in the completely socialized society that there is no possibility of peaceful change and that the State, if it is to be secure, must arm itself with all the powers of the police state. If it fails to do so, the State will pass through a series of revolutionary crises to the inevitable end of military dictatorship.

We need not anticipate such a development in Great Britain; the balance of social and economic forces makes it unlikely, although it does not make it impossible. We are not, however, predominantly, as is the United States, an agricultural country, nor like Belgium an industrial country. There is an equal balance, numerically, between manufacturing industry, commerce, and agriculture; and an increasing proportion of those employed in industry are the so-called black-coated workers. As science advances and mechanization proceeds, the manual workers decrease in numbers and influence. The great Transport and General Workers' Union, the Miners' Union, and the different Textile Operatives' Unions will remain solidly loyal to the Labour-Socialist party, but it is symptomatic that the Seamen's and allied unions have recently declared themselves hostile to the nationalization of shipping, and it is to be expected that the workers in the distributive trades and the clerical workers may be forced to similar declarations by their members. Nationalization is, in fact, unpopular; only in so far as the electorate swallows the ballyhoo about Socialism as the only alternative to mass unemployment, can a bare majority be induced to support nationalization at the polls, but even then they only do so because they do not regard it as a live issue. Socialist candidates scarcely refer to it, and Conservative candidates are reluctant to do so because, when they do, they are accused of trying to shirk the real issues—food prices, unemployment, the extension of the social services, and the future level of wages. It is here that the danger lies. Elections can be won by fear or by promises and usually by a judicious

combination of both. The great constructive reforms of the last thirty years—the social security system, protection, and the subsidization of agriculture—were never election issues. If there is a Conservative Government in office when the next economic crisis brings with it the inevitable unemployment (which, in a country dependent on its export trade, no government by itself can prevent) we shall get another strong Socialist Government and Socialism may well be carried forward to the point when the free-enterprise system is finally undermined. If, on the other hand, the Socialists were, as at present, in office but not in power, it would be their cause which would be overwhelmed. In the absence of a crisis the balance of political power will remain even until either the Socialists capture the agricultural vote, which means capturing the country towns and the farmers as well as the farm workers, or the Conservatives consolidate their hold on the poorer paid black-coated workers, who at present tend to vote Socialist in the hope of securing increased benefits not from nationalization, which does not interest them, but from the social services.

Meanwhile the realities of our economic problem excite the interest of none, because no one wishes to face the unpleasant but indispensable remedies. We are living on the edge of bankruptcy for one reason, and one reason only, that we are trying to settle our own standard of welfare without reference to the price which the outside world will pay for the goods which we must sell to the outside world or starve. All parties are aware of this fact. None is prepared to face it until events reach a crisis which will, it is hoped, have the appearance of a crisis imposed on us from the outside, so that the unpleasant measures which will be necessary may not appear to reflect discredit on the party or parties which have to initiate them. Mr. Attlee's government to-day is doing exactly what Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's government did from 1929 to 1931 in the optimistic hope that it will be able to shuffle off responsibility, in the eyes of the electorate, on to whatever group of politicians is called to clear up the mess.

The chief political difference between the situation of 1929 and now (1950), is that Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was not in any way responsible for the situation he inherited, while Mr.

Attlee manifestly is. The first duty of any post-war administration was to get our currency on to a firm and realistic basis, to abolish subsidies, to allow wages to rise, and to let the £ sink to a new parity truly representative of its purchasing power. By failing to do this, Mr. Attlee has not avoided devaluation but he is left with the subsidies which he must maintain in order to freeze wages, in order to prevent a further devaluation. In all human probability he will fail to freeze wages, will still be left with the subsidies, and may even be forced to a further devaluation. It is probable that the free-enterprise system could pay higher wages, if taxation were reduced to reasonable levels, if the reserves of free enterprise were built up again, and more money was left to fructify in the pockets of the taxpayer, but no great expansion of British industry is possible so long as the political pressure for higher wages and shorter hours continues. This pressure must inevitably continue, and indeed increase, so long as those who exercise it are sheltered from the consequences by subsidies, rations, and vast unrequited imports of food and raw materials from the United States.

It would be doing an injustice to the British people to suppose that most of them are not aware that the present state of affairs cannot last. A great many of what appear to be plainly unreasonable demands are really moves by the craft unions to obtain a better position relative to unskilled labour, or to other skilled crafts, before the crisis arrives. As for the politicians, a lot of their vacillation is also jockeying for position and still more, perhaps, due to the grave international situation and the desire to have behind them in any international crisis a contented and united people. Much the same feeling plainly actuates the rulers of the other democratic countries, notably the governments of France and the United States. Nevertheless, Great Britain has to decide quickly whether or no to restore the conditions under which we can live freely of our own, with a currency universally valid and freely exchangeable. Only in this way can we come once again to compete successfully in the world's markets and become once again masters in our own house. The alternative is to go on to build a socialized economy, eking out an indifferent and always threatened livelihood on rations, and denied in perpetuity the right to

spend our money as we like, or to found families and provide for our children. Does our future lie as free citizens of a democracy or as inmates of a charitable institution, financed largely by raids on a rapidly diminishing volume of free capital.

We face this choice under heavy handicaps. There is the great pressure of the new bureaucracy, represented in the ranks of business as much as in the ranks of government. What passes for expert opinion is, as we have suggested, almost always professional bureaucratic opinion. For some inexplicable reason such men as Lord Nuffield or Lord Perry, Sir Harry McGowan or Sir George Nelson, men who have built big businesses and personally control them, are not regarded as experts on business affairs. We go to financial journalists or professors or politicians who, quite absurdly, are regarded as disinterested, although it is they who are to-day reaching out for and are on the verge of attaining an absolute and permanent monopoly of power, which, if they get it, can only be taken from them by a destructive revolutionary process. Secondly, we have the popular fear of unemployment, and not so much the contentment of the wage earners with their present situation but their belief that Socialism will enable them to exercise far greater pressure on government, for more and more benefits in cash or kind, than they could ever exercise on the private employer.

Against this can be set one great counter-balance. The majority of the British people would far prefer higher wages and a freer life, by which they mean the right to spend their higher wages as they like; further, almost all, irrespective of party, have a great distrust of the efficiency of government enterprise and a great dislike of the bad manners and domineering of the petty official. They wish to be served, not to be ruled. We speak, despairingly, of 'the' post office, but we can still speak, and wish to go on speaking, of 'my' butcher or 'my' green-grocer. If the issue of nationalization could be kept separate from the rest of our political problems, the public would almost certainly decide against it by an overwhelming majority. Unfortunately, under our present constitution, this cannot be. We have noted how, unless there is some modification of the doctrine of national sovereignty, the world's freedom is at

hazard whenever there is a general election in France or Italy or, sooner or later, in Western Germany, because any chance local issue might yield a transient anti-democratic majority in these countries. It is equally true that a local, and quite irrelevant, election issue might arise in Britain which would return to power as well as office a strong Socialist government. Such a government would be unable to turn its back on its declared policy, however much its leaders, and most of all the anti-Communist trade union leaders, might wish to do so.

It is not often appreciated, and it is high time that it was, that Great Britain is the only great power seeking to operate an unrestricted democracy without an effective second chamber and without a written constitution. So long as this state of affairs persists there can be no political peace in Great Britain and no real economic recovery, because neither Great Britain herself, nor her colonial empire, can become an attractive field for that investment of foreign (in practice American) capital which alone can adjust the balance of payments between a debtor country and her creditors.

For this reason, many believe that the wiser heads in all parties will be brought to face in the near future the necessity for constitutional reforms, particularly since, in present circumstances, an even balance of parties is likely to continue. Such reforms would include inevitably the democratic reform of the House of Lords, but British opinion will not be likely to tolerate any serious effort to restore two-chamber government on the French or American model; a solution will have to be sought on other lines and must be directed to the great democratic problem, the problem of irreversible legislation.

Such legislation is in itself a clear and explicit denial of the rights of democracy, for it binds future generations and thus leads to a steady progressive diminution of the area of free choice, of the matters in respect of which men remain free. It would be very foolish so to legislate that all the profits of businesses of a certain kind were appropriated to the State, and it would certainly be monstrously unjust, but if the House of Commons so voted it would not be anti-democratic. The next House of Commons would be free to change its mind. Popular majorities have always done foolish and unjust things, but, so

long as they can be undone, they must be regarded as the necessary price of freedom. But you cannot be asked to pay for freedom with the loss of freedom. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that irreversible legislation should require a special procedure of popular approval, in the manner of a constitutional amendment in the United States or Australia. It is obviously a monstrous invasion of political freedom that irreversible and revolutionary legislation should be passed by a bare majority of the House of Commons alone, or in face of a hostile majority of the electorate. But it is an equal invasion of freedom that it should be passed at all except by a very substantial majority of the electorate obtained after due reflection on the specific issue. In other words, we need for our peace and our progress to make a beginning of a written constitution, the provisions of which would themselves be alterable only by special procedure.

It would probably be sufficient to require that irreversible legislation, either denying rights to or imposing inescapable obligations on future parliaments, irrespective of their wishes, should require to be approved by referendum by a two-thirds majority, not earlier than a year after the proposal had passed both Houses of Parliament. Should our political development be, as has also been suggested, towards federalism, with separate Parliaments for England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, a further check would automatically be imposed. The danger of revolutionary reforms either contrary to the majority will or imposed by a bare majority is, as history shows, much reduced under any federal system.

There are no great practical difficulties in defining what has here been called irreversible legislation. Obviously the confiscation or compulsory purchase of capital assets, a measure of nationalization or a capital levy, would come under any description attempted. Practical difficulties, such as might arise over the definition of what is or is not a money bill, could not be altogether avoided, but in that case the decision would be for the courts as in the present Australian constitution.

It must be specially noted that few if any practical limitations would be imposed on the freedom of any government which thought it useless to attempt to secure the necessary majority

for an 'irreversible' legislative proposal; there is nothing that a government might wish to do within the lifetime of Parliament which could not be done to an industry by legislation which was reversible. It could take over management and it could take over, subject to meeting the prior charges, profits. If a government were dissatisfied with these powers, it would be because its real objective was not reform but revolution, not to untie its own hands but to tie those of future generations, not to exercise the prerogatives of a free sovereign Parliament but to deny effective freedom and effective sovereignty to future Parliaments. That, in effect, is the revolutionary intention behind those Socialist proposals which seek to set up a completely socialized state. If, after due deliberation and by an unmistakable and substantial majority, the people decide on a revolution, then revolution must take its course. Nothing but military force can in that case prevent it, and the remedy would be worse than the disease. The free world cannot continue, however, in the face of Communist aggression, with Great Britain paralysed by the continuing threat of an economic revolution. We must never forget that although the motive force behind the British Socialist party to-day is mainly bureaucratic and traditional, a strong Communistic minority of the trade unionists are supporters of Socialism because they see a socialized state as one in which the industries would fall under the control of the unions rather than under Parliament. As long as the present generation of trade union leaders are in power this might not be fatal, but in due course the old-fashioned chapel-going Labour leaders will pass from the scene and the future leadership of the unions may well lie with men very much further to the left.

A most disquieting feature of Britain under Socialism is the decline in public morality due to the decline not in religious observance, which is of long standing, but in religious belief. The Labour movement which used to voice the strong, simple, and explicitly Christian belief of the chapels, against the more Erastian views of the Establishment, is to-day becoming strongly sceptical and secularist if not actively anti-clerical. A gulf is opening up between the generations. There is painfully little ethical difference between the conception of political right and

wrong held by National Socialists and Communists and those held by many left-wing Socialists (including many who are sincerely anti-Communist). They dislike different things and different people from those who fell under the lash of Hitler or are still under the lash of Premier Stalin, but they react to what they dislike in the same way. The idea of equal justice for all no longer binds the conscience of the British progressives, and the idea of justice of any kind is losing ground. The increase in crimes of violence is alarming, but it is not as socially significant as the immense increase in thieving of other people's goods at docks, on railways, and in the public service. The political doctrines so long preached, that the rights of majorities are absolute, that anybody's property is everybody's, if only enough people say so, are themselves denials of elementary public morality and have had a repercussive effect on private morals. To take what you can get is a measure which, if sound and accepted in politics, cannot easily be confined to public life.

A revolutionary change is needed in our approach to the central problem of education if this difficulty is to be surmounted. The long war on the denominational schools is having its effect. Secularism is on the march. The fact that much denominational education was very bad, and that some of what still survives is very second grade, is no answer. An educational system which does not put moral education first will never discipline society to the ways of civilized and Christian living. The freedom which we cherish and wish to preserve can only survive within a closed moral system. We come back once again to the old choice: we can learn to be free citizens in a Christian commonwealth or we can become the disciplined inmates of a secularist institution. There is no third choice before us.

If they are to make the right choice, men need the help of institutions, not teaching institutions external to the society in which they live and challenging its implications, but institutions from whose roots the society itself springs and by which it is normally and naturally supported. The first basic secular institution of the Christian society is the family and the second is the corporation. It is perhaps the chief criticism of modern

secularism that it has tended to weaken the family tie and of state socialism that it expressly seeks to destroy the corporate conception of society. The whole trend of what is called economic progress, towards larger aggregations of property, factory production, standardization, and the like, is to make the individual less and less the master of his fate, less and less conscious of his individual responsibilities to his family and his neighbours. It would be the function of a wise government to correct this tendency by directing its remedial legislature to improving the economic position of the family, as opposed to the individual, to enforcing, instead of weakening, parental responsibility, to encouraging ownership, which is the essential secular foundation of the family economy, and by judicious fiscal measures to easing the lot of the small holder, the small shopkeeper, and the small producer and manufacturer. Many people are to-day alive to this, and the Conservative aim of 'a property-owning democracy' marks the explicit recognition by one of the two great political parties of the need to safeguard the economic independence of the family. But much remains to be done.

As far as concerns the corporate character of society, all parties are equally at fault in having deliberately created a system under which men are taught to look, for the ultimate source of their well-being, neither to themselves and their own thrift, nor to the corporation in which they serve (be it a profession, a limited liability company, a co-operative association, an industry, or a craft), but to the State. The result is the artificial stimulation of an unnatural rivalry whereby the individual as citizen puts pressure on the State to give him benefits which the State in turn can only pay for by passing the burden back, in one form or another, to trade or industry or agriculture; the individual worker, therefore, is asking at the same time for cash and services from the State and for higher rewards from his trade, profession, or employment and is never called to consider the necessary relation between his personal efforts and the totality of his rewards. In his view, what he cannot get as a workman from the industrial swings, he will extract as a voter from the political roundabouts. This leads to a division of loyalties and ends in the worst of all situations,

when men feel a real loyalty only to that political organization which can in their judgment extract the most on their behalf from the community.

Quite clearly reform is needed, but fortunately the remedy in this matter is easy to see and equally easy to apply. There is no need to interfere with the minimum payments and the services at present supplied by the welfare state, but all these insurances, pensions, and allowances must become the responsibility of industry, agriculture, and the professions, so that all men have to look to the corporation in which they are responsible partners, and never elsewhere, for the just and full rewards of their service. The change would effect no saving to the taxpayer and no abatement of the contribution of the individual, for the present benefits, to which public faith is pledged, would have to be maintained, but the right and necessary relation between the work and its reward could be re-established and an expansion of benefits secured by relating all benefits in excess of the state-guaranteed minimum to length and quality of service. In any case, all men would have to look exclusively for all their material rewards to the trade, industry, or profession in which their years of service had been spent. The responsibility for social welfare and security would be placed, in other words, where it belongs in morals, on the shoulders of the corporation, and removed wholly and for ever from the irresponsible control of politicians who, no more than any other class of human beings, can be trusted to exercise wisdom, moderation, and justice, when someone else is paying the bill.

What the prospect may be of such salutary and indeed imperative reforms is hard to judge. If the existing balance between the parties continues, the prospect is fairly good. The real issue, however, is moral rather than political. There is a strong and virile Christian tradition behind the British Labour movement, and those who have been born and bred in that tradition are already uneasy at the visible weakening of its influence. A lot of rubbish is at present being talked about the need to restore material incentives to harder work, but it is the restoration of moral imperatives and institutional incentives which is urgently called for. A return to a proper

conception of Christian education is the first condition of recovery; the second is to restore and to defend continuously the rights of the family and of the corporation and to recognize these rights, in all legislation, as superior to and antecedent to those of the State. It is for the conscience of the community to assert through Parliament and to continue, as may be, to raise, the standards to which all the institutions within the State must conform. If, however, the State seeks to assume the obligation for providing these standards, at the expense of the economic independence of the family and the moral responsibility of the corporation for its members and dependants, it will continue to strike deep at the roots of its own strength and well-being and society will be brought to the verge of dissolution. Our society has roots which are still deep and strong, but it will be restored to health only if those roots are tended, preserved, and renewed.

Finally, we are no longer an island, and we do not live in a peaceful but in a very hostile world. Our first concern, after the moral education of our people, must be for their defence, and for the defence of the other free nations of the west who can stand united but must otherwise fall, one and all, victims of the aggressive hostility of the Communist powers. It is an indefeasible moral obligation on all governments to see to the defence of the country, and to tell the country what sacrifices are necessary if we are not, as we did in the thirties, to sacrifice our future for our present electoral convenience.

Until the menace of economic collapse is removed, we can never be strong either in diplomacy or in our own defence. Until we are cured of the dream of constructing and maintaining in isolation a closed Socialist economy we can never inspire the confidence of all our allies and make a valid contribution to the cause of that union among the free peoples which alone can give them strength. It is the failure of our Socialist rulers to realize this which is paralysing Western Europe to-day and causing grave doubts all over the world as to the chances of our recovery. It is not only the welfare state, with all that it means to the health and security of the individual to-day, but the freedom of the western world, with all that it means to generations yet unborn, which is menaced by the isolationist

aims and ambitions of British Socialism. Our present rulers have at least the duty to make it known to our people and to the world where they stand and where they propose to go. It is their failure to do either of these things which history may well judge to be their chief disservice to the country and to the great causes which the majority of them most surely wish to serve.

EPILOGUE

How DO we feel as individuals about these matters which, as so often in the past, gravely disquiet us as citizens? There is a contemporary fashion which tells us that we must get behind the façade of political history and seek out and describe the common life of every day, the fears, the emotions, and the beliefs of simple people, if we are to discern the reality beyond the appearances of history. There is another fashion which tells us the precise opposite, that man's beliefs, his loves, and his hates are conditioned by external circumstances, that happiness is a matter of adjustment, that to understand the cause is to tolerate and finally to welcome the effect. There is an important element of truth as well as fundamental falsity in both these speculative approaches to the problem of the individual in society.

It is of course true that the organs of a society in process of dissolution retain an astonishing vitality long after they have lost the power of renewing themselves, let alone the power of fruitful growth. Habits of life and standards of conduct persist long after the faith or reason which bred them has ceased to dominate men's minds. It must certainly have been possible in the fifth, the eleventh, and the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, when cataclysmic changes were in progress all over the western world and notably in England, to have found many who were unaware of what was going on. It is as easy at a great distance of time to forget this as it is hard to discern changes which are in progress around us, and it is very tempting to substitute for a serious study of the historical process a record of social behaviour based on the tittle-tattle of letter writers and diarists, on gleanings from such contemporary documents as chance has preserved, or on inferences from the literature of the period as to the customary thoughts of ordinary people. Attempting such a record to-day, we could easily show

that in the matter of health, of material well-being, of freedom from want, pain, and anxiety, perhaps above all in the easing of the daily burden of work, the people of England feel themselves to-day in a position greatly more favourable than ever before. Yet if, at the beginning of June 1914, any one had been able to foresee that in the course of the next thirty-six years more than seventy million people in Europe and Asia would be killed in war or by famine or disease or criminal actions generated by the barbarisms of war or politics, he would have realized that the world was on the threshold of the greatest catastrophe known to human history. And if this prophet had been, as prophets often are, a man of liberal faith, and if his gift of foresight had extended beyond the field of mere statistics into the social and political consequences of the catastrophe, he would have seen a vision so horrifying to the mind of those times that he would with difficulty have preserved his reason or refrained from the final guilt of despair. To-day, with a third of the human race in prison and another third intensively preparing for a war of liberation only barely distinguishable from suicide, we are asked to sit back in admiration at the wisdom and the generosity of our rulers, to glorify ourselves for our good fortune in living in such a world at such a time.

All of which goes to show that there is only too much truth in the view that men will insensibly adjust their beliefs, their tolerance, and their morality to the conditions around them. The thing forgotten is that in so doing they deprive themselves of the power to modify those conditions. It is that power, and that alone, which distinguishes man from the beasts. Man can save his soul if he corresponds with grace, but not if he substitutes for that fundamental necessity of his being a correspondence course in the psychology of adjustment. It is true that man can free himself from the conception of sin, but, as Conrad reminded us, it is the guilt alone that matters.

The finer minds of our time have become aware of this, not before it was time. There has at last been a strong reaction from the intellectual nihilism of the twenties, but if our novelists to-day have discovered a sense of sin it has not put their feet in the way of salvation. Their tortured consciences are on frequent exhibition but the picture they present is one of

despair. The possibility of redemption is almost universally excluded by a generation which has tired of charity and found faith only to lose hope.

M. Mauriac, now for the first time widely read in English, stands alone to rebuke at one and the same time the faithless and the faithful by preaching the oldest of all gospels, redemption through suffering unrequited by joy. He has reminded us, in company with that strange British genius of the eighth century, John Scotus, that Christ tells us to carry the Cross, not to worship it. Because he asserts absolute standards, yet deals, with an ample charity, with those who fall far short of them, M. Mauriac attracts the admiration of many Englishmen to-day, whereas in the thirties even his admitted genius could not win him an audience outside France. But it must be noted that while M. Mauriac believes in redemption, he does not believe in reform. The success of a great human effort for the betterment of men does not enter into his world of imagined possibilities, since grace is given to men to save their souls, not to improve their material conditions. Even in M. Mauriac's world, dominated by a sense of sin and overshadowed by eternity, society itself has ceased to believe in its moral basis. According to our own novelists, we live in the nadir of the secularist society and they proclaim our doom to a chorus of applause from the scientists, the very people who, twenty years ago, were proudly proclaiming their conquest over all the ills to which the flesh is heir. The deluge of solvents, which has weakened all the traditional loyalties, secularized the schools, and filled the divorce courts, has had none of the intended effects in providing an enduring basis for a secular morality or a revised ethic of citizenship. If many of the churches are half empty the ethical church is emptier. If conventional morality is losing its hold, it is a new convention, not a new morality, which is coming into play. Apart from the writings of a few Catholic novelists, and there are no optimists among them, the characteristic novels of our time are novels less of despair than of disgust. You cannot write a comedy of manners in an age with no manners, nor a tragedy in an age with no morality. And you cannot despair unless you despair of something worth having which you are conscious of having lost. The cause of

'reform' could inspire creative literature, but 'reconstruction' issues in a deluge of mere propaganda. The change from a moral to a statistical basis of conduct has left as deep a mark on our national literature as on our politics and our position as a world power. If the change becomes permanent the effect on our national character is bound to be substantial and for the worse.

We cannot derive much comfort from such essays in mass observation as 'Eighty Thousand Adolescents,' a study of the young people between fourteen and twenty in the factories, shops, and workshops of Birmingham, of whom only 5 per cent read any daily newspaper except the *Daily Mirror* or any Sunday newspaper except the *Sunday Pictorial* and the *News of the World*. Their average pocket money is 7s. 6d. a week at fourteen and rises to 21s. at eighteen—figures, incidentally, which would be regarded with horror by any public-school headmaster—but 25 per cent of these fortunate young people read no books, and of the remainder most read weekly comics or boys' and girls' weeklies only. Less than 1 per cent read either the *Sunday Times* or the *Observer* or listen to talks on the radio, although 80 per cent are regular 'listeners.' The staple amusement is, of course, the cinema; after that the dance hall, the dirt track, and watching football. Sixty-five per cent of these young never enter a church.

All this is not progress but decline.

Fortunately it is true to say that the standard of popular middle-class entertainment is rising. Probably it has never been higher: when T. S. Eliot has a philosophic melodrama in verse playing to large houses on Broadway and in London, when the great awards of the film industry go to novelists of the intellectual calibre of Graham Greene and Robert Penn Warren, we are justified in saying this with considerable emphasis. These men have looked deep below the surface of the contemporary world and seen the rottenness of its moral and intellectual foundations. They have proclaimed their infidelity to the world and the world has acclaimed them. That is good, but it is not out of the pattern we have been describing, for these writers are not reformers. They have no belief in reform. They are content to tell to a bemused but curious generation

the story of the fall of man. We are beginning to accept the fact but we are as yet unaware of the cause or the cure. We remain, so far, mere sentimentalists.

What has happened to England is that the religion of progress has lived on into an age of visible decline. To see clearly is to lose faith ; to retain the belief in progress is to defy reason. The gods of the market-place have lost their magic and there is no place left to go except the world of make-believe.

These things have happened before, but never in an age of popular education and a national press. Christianity conquered the despair of the Roman world in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries by word of mouth and by example, but it did not have to face a mass-educated, mass-propaganded body of opinionated ignorance. 'Upon this empire, as upon that of Rome, calamity has at last fallen. A horde of intellectual barbarians has burst in upon it and has occupied by force the length and breadth of it. The result has been astounding. Had the invaders been barbarians only they might have been repelled easily : but they were barbarians armed with the most powerful weapons of civilization. They were a phenomenon new to history ; they showed us real power in the hands of real ignorance, and the work of the combination thus far has been ruin, not reorganization.' This famous and fateful prophecy, made in 1879, is now fulfilled. Christianity to-day has to reconquer the world from its allegiance to the false gods of the enlightenment, but its task is far more difficult than at any previous stage in Christian history. The vast engines of propaganda speak to the mass mind, not to the souls of men. In any case we do not control them and have the most limited access to them. Christian education is penalized and placed under the stigma of being denominational, which is precisely as sane as to deride and penalize patriotism on the ground that it is national. Men and women not only wish but have an indefeasible natural right to bring up their children in the light of those truths by which they themselves live ; the mounting record of crime and the decay of morality bear ample witness to the penalty which society is paying for having denied that right and to the guilt of those who have acquiesced in the denial. The influence of the new art of broadcasting has been less

gravely abused, but we are forced to ask whether Broadcasting House still stands 'on the promise of the Covenant.' The major difficulty stands even clearer for all to see. The highly organized and highly centralized energy of our society is almost wholly directed to concealing from all save the most persistently curious the shallow and crumbling foundations of the leisured materialism in which we exist. When the Roman world was falling asunder and the barbarian was within the gates, the succession of mercenary soldiers taking the assassin's path to the throne was plainly revealed as the only source not of salvation but of respite. To-day the appearances of prosperity can be imposed upon the reality of ruin. The judicious manipulation of the price level, proclaimed as a generous virtue, can pervert the judgment and suborn the suffrages of millions of innocent people who, because they are never called on to pay the price of their desires, have no means of knowing the inescapable penalty which they are imposing on their children. But there remains to us the natural virtue which tells us that as we sow we reap, that we cannot produce more by working less, or add to the world's happiness except by consuming less, instead of more, than the value of what we produce. This knowledge no false philosophy can deny to us, because it is natural to man. All that is needed is the grace to apply this knowledge, and the channels of grace are never closed. There lies the abiding hope. But if there is a light amid our darkness and a hint of dawn in the sky, it is a light not of this world and the dawn is of no Utopia upon earth.



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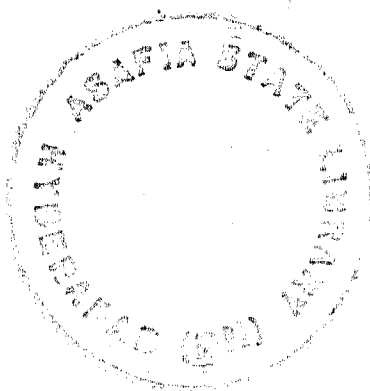
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